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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The understanding of what is referred to as the "textualization of history" has extended beyond the realm of academic discussions and become part of common knowledge. We tend to readily accept the lack of definitive historical "truth" and the fact that our understanding of history is based on interpretations of facts and stories, as they are presented to us by historians, politicians, cultural figures and social media. The past no longer appears as a generalized and fixed account of events, but rather as refracted through personal stories, it has as many faces as the individuals who tell it. The cataclysmic events of the twentieth century, such as the Second World War, have become accessible through individual life narratives, memoirs, diaries, witness testimonals, and many other (auto)biographical forms of narration. Fascination with the individualized past as history, in both autobiographical and biographical stories, shows no signs of diminishing – to the contrary, life stories – both in print and film – are increasingly popular.[1] The fact that life narratives tell us what "objective history" is silent about – a story of the everyday human experience – may be the major cause of their appeal.

Since 1970s, the studies of life writing have come to value not only the narrated stories of lives of important political and cultural figures, but also those of everyman, people whose voices had previously been suppressed by the social and/or political pressures. While the various forms of life narratives provide a much needed and an increasingly esteemed alternative perspective on historical events, they are often in conflict with factual history. It is the personal, the subjective understanding in life writing that has been considered so fascinating. Nevertheless, what defines the auto/biographical narratives is their "truth value"; on this, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have noted that "life narratives solicit a particular mode of reading, since they are claiming not verisimilitude, but the 'truth' of lived experience, however elusive that may be" (Smith and Watson 2008, 358–359). Readers and viewers expect the stories to be based on actual facts, even though they readily accept that the stories are *interpretations* of these facts.

Certainly, the parallels between history and personal stories are drawn by narrators. "Stories don't just 'come' from a life"; as such, Smith and Watson claim that an autobiographical narrative should be viewed in light of existing forms of storytelling, since "[s]elf-representation and acts of self-narrating are always located, historical, subjective, political, and embodied" (Smith and

[1] The reasons for this are many and varied: depending on the nature of the life narrative, its popularity can be seen as affected by different social and cultural factors, including "increase of prosperity and longer life expectations of people in the West, a recognition of trauma and the figure of the witness, an intensification of celebrity culture and reality tv, identity politics and the formation of counter-histories by groups of people who do not recognize themselves in dominant historical narratives, and global transformations such as the end of the Cold War and 9/11" (Huisman 2012, 9).

Watson 2008, 357). Without necessarily changing history, life narratives provide alternative perspectives on history.

"Our past" is shaped by personal and collective history and memory – from personal to public sphere, the past takes a mediated narrative form. As Alison Landsberg has stated, at the "interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theater or museum," a form of public cultural memory – *prosthetic memory* – emerges (Landsberg 2004, 2).

Associated with the increasing impact of mass media, especially film and television, history has become accessible and interesting to everyman. The history that historical films present is an interpretation of the past, as defined by various stakeholders such as film producers, screenwriters, directors, actors, and so on; but also influenced by genre conventions, the political climate, social norms, and other factors. Since historical films have also established their place and role in shaping public understanding of the past, the same "truth value" discourse surrounds the historical film and history.

In what follows, I focus on adaptations of (auto)biographical texts created after the Second World War, a catastrophic event that has had a complex impact on world history. The stories of this war mirror its huge impact on many events in their different representations. Numerous films of various genres have emerged, each of which have influenced the collective memory of the Second World War. Many of these films claim to be "based on a true story", meaning that they have either been inspired by or relied on actual events.

The case studies selected for discussion in this thesis revolve around traumatic experiences of individuals from war and its aftermath. Furthermore, these films themselves are "based on" the individual (auto)biographical narratives that have influenced the public understanding of history. Notably, the "truth" of a personal story may potentially differ from the historical "truth". The concept of "truth" thus includes the various versions of what is considered or perceived to be true. These could be classified as: 1) an established historical "truth", a historically accurate fact, as documented and accepted by the majority of historiographers and the public; 2) a specific perspective or an interpretation of events accepted as true by particular communities, peoples, and/or audiences; 3) an opinion, a subjective version or an interpretation of a "fact" accepted as true by individuals or groups; and 4) a "felt" or "experienced" truth, or inner "truth" of the individual. The latter individual "truth" will not necessarily match the established or accepted facts, but it reveals a human embodied and affective "self" as it discloses aspects of lived human experience. Personal narratives are crucial in studies of history, memory, identity, and in understanding of the process of the constitution of the self (self-forming or "subjectivation" in works by Foucault).

Any adaptation can be considered an interpretation, a selection process based on subjective value judgements and ethics. This is particularly true of historical-biographical film adaptations that often involve explorations of ethically sensitive, even controversial facts and events, presentations of subjective versions of past events, and considerations of issues of personal involvement or

complicity. The ethical perspectives in films are articulated through the aesthetic-cinematographic form which is not ethically neutral: due to its complexity and multimodality, the film's aesthetic form serves as a tool and a medium for a negotiation of values and the complexity of the human experience. Asbjørn Grønstad has coined the term "ethical imagination" to refer to the critical, transformative potential of aesthetic form in films (Grønstad 2016). Even if based on a "true story" (meaning here an established set of facts), any film adaptation, a transformative, interpretative act, provokes a reassessment of "true facts" and a reconfiguration of values.

In the case of an adaptation of a personal life story, that is entangled in the Story of turbulent historical events, a discrepancy between an accepted and an experienced "truth" together with the necessity to render a personal "truth" (a personal perspective on events) may create particularly sharp tensions and posit ethical dilemmas. The objectifying power of film, supported by the institutional and commercial filmmaker-studio-audience relationship structures, may somehow restrain or downplay a subjective perspective. Due to the transformative aspects of film aesthetics, of temporal and cultural distance, of changes in public taste and cultural conventions, and of the existence of different conflicting historical "truths", the adaptation of historical and biographical events to screen often presents filmmakers with complex choices.

This dissertation explores and discusses the process of adaptation of autobiographical narratives and the ethical choices the filmmakers face, particularly in retaining a subjective perspective as accessible through the autobiographical source texts, without yielding an "objective" historical "feel". Three case studies focus on three film adaptations of personal stories that are interwoven with critical, challenging events of the World War II. These autobiographical narratives describe situations where the familiar daily routines and rules have lost their meaning, and the personal choices and responsibilities become particularly important.

The first case study is a movie directed by Roman Polanski, *The Pianist,* a 2002 film adaptation of the memoirs of Władysław Szpilman, a Jewish musician and a survivor of the Holocaust in Warsaw, Poland. First published in Poland in 1946, this memoir fell into obscurity until it was re-published before the turn of this century. Facilitated by German and English translations, the book has become an international success. Roman Polanski's critically acclaimed take on Szpilman's story connects closely to a significant change in attitudes towards depicting Holocaust events in drama films.

The second case study, a film directed by Max Fäberböck, is *Anonyma – Eine Frau in Berlin* (2008) which depicts the terror that the march by the Soviet Red Army into Berlin in 1945 meant for civilians trapped in the city. The film is based on an anonymous diary titled *A Woman in Berlin. Diary, 20 April 1945 to 22 June 1945* (*Anonyma: Eine Frau in Berlin. Tagebuchaufzeichnungen vom 20. April bis 22. Juni 1945)*. The diary was published in the 1950s and it is an account of the time immediately before and after the capitulation of the Nazi Germany, told from the perspective of a woman who experienced its

consequences. Both the subject matter – sexual violence against women – and the author's description of her experiences, caused outrage in Germany after the war. Mirrored in the reception of this film adaptation are changes in attitudes towards women's rights and the acknowledgement of effects that the World War II had on both sides of the conflict.

Thirdly, a historical drama *Hamsun* by Jan Troell (1996) is an adaptation of a documentary novel *Processen mod Hamsun* ([*The Trial of Hamsun*], 1978) by Danish journalist and author Thorkild Hansen. The film focuses on accusations of treason that Knut Hamsun faced due to his sympathies towards the Nazi Germany and his court trial in Norway. In his portrayal of Knut Hamsun, Thorkild Hansen used Hamsun's writings, especially the autobiographical novel *On Overgrown Paths* (1949). Despite a noticeable gap in terms of publication time between the autobiographical novel by Hamsun, the documentary novel by Thorkild Hansen and its film adaptation by Jan Troell, the story in all three texts revolves around the central theme of how Knut Hamsun was perceiving his own "guilt".

For this study, I have chosen film adaptations published many years after their (auto)biographical sources. When discussing films that were created a number of years after their source texts, the comparisons between the context of the adaptations and source texts are likely to reveal changes in the ideological tendencies, values and beliefs of society over time. All three films targeted international audiences but held an important role in the national discourse. I therefore consider how each of these film adaptations reflect the social, political and cultural context and norms at national and global levels.

The film adaptations that I will discuss include internal (subjective, first-person) perspectives of their autobiographical narrators. They retain a connection with their documentary sources and the presumption of a "true story", despite expressing a truth that is "felt" or "experienced". On the other hand, these adaptations re-interpret and reinvent the past: their relationship to original "facts" or "actual events" is complex and indirect, mediated by various sources, perspectives, and the media. Ultimately, past events are integrated into the "prosthetic memory": a substitute memory shaped by the representations circulating in the public sphere that bear on our perception of historical events. A. Landsberg describes the process in which "a person sutures himself or herself into a larger history", and thus through the historical narrative, the past – even though it is not a lived, personal past – becomes a "deeply felt memory" that "has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity and politics" (Landsberg 2004, 2).

To summarize, the adaptations I discuss may be considered manifestations of the *prosthetic memory*, demonstrating how the past keeps affecting the present. The discussion around fictional and nonfictional interpretations of history is closely connected to the "fidelity" issue in adaptation studies.

In part, I have in my approach to these case studies selected for this thesis been inspired by Anne-Marie Scholz's approach in *From Fidelity to History: Film Adaptations as Cultural Events in the Twentieth Century* (2013). Scholz

proposes to develop "the classic 'case studies' approach" with a purpose "to demonstrate the ways in which film adaptation can function as a kind of cultural strategy for grappling with different types of social and cultural change" (Scholz 2013, 3). I find that examining these three films and their source texts in the context of their reception by and their influence on the attitudes of the audience, sheds light on the cultural, social and political changes that have taken place between the publication of the source text and the release of the film adaptation. Therefore, on the pages that follow I view text, both literary and film, *as text* and as a text *in context*.

Furthermore, as with all (film) adaptations, the plurality of sources must be considered – in addition to providing different perspectives and interpretations of historical events, these personal stories adapted to films are influenced by various, often competing sources. Therefore, I will discuss which specific features of the (auto)biographical narrative have been incorporated into the film adaptation. I explore how, in the process of adaptation, the first-person narration of an autobiographical "I" is rendered or modified in the film text. According to Paul John Eakin, the autobiography is an attempt "to reconstruct what it felt like to be this particular person", but the same goal can also be credited to the biography (Eakin 1992, 54). Reading an autobiographical work, the subjective experiences of an autobiographical "I" capture our attention, and through this, a kind of "reconstruction process" takes place. Thus, the relevant and interesting question when discussing historical-biographical films *as adaptations of (auto)biographical sources*, lies not only in the biographical facts and in how the film makes these aspects come alive for the audiences, but in how the original personal, subjective perspective of the autobiographical narrator impacts the film text. I find that comparative textual analysis works well in this regard, thusly, my analysis consists of what Scholz calls "classic case studies". In this process, I concentrate on key scenes in the written source materials and view how these (if indeed) have been transformed in the film narratives. Specifically, I look at the use of point of view (POV) shots, flashbacks, camera movement, and other relevant aspects. The case study discussion also includes some mise-en-scène analysis of selected scenes in order to highlight the performance of the actor playing the biographical character.

The words, tone and style of storytelling is one thing, but in trying to convey the undefinable "essence" of an autobiographical text, filmmakers mostly turn to varying camera techniques, and most notably, when trying to convey the subjective point-of-view through images, to the POV shots. Indeed, whose "point of view" (or perspective) the story is presented from, influences our understanding of it. The terms "point of view" and "perspective" are somewhat mixed. In *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics. Structuralism, Post-structuralism and Beyond* (1992), the term "point-of-view" is considered "one of the most important means of structuring narrative discourse and one of the most powerful mechanisms for audience manipulation," as well as one of "the areas of greatest difficulty and confusion in film analysis" (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis 1992, 84). The term can be used to refer to camera work

(point-of-view shots), when considering the story as if from the character's perspective; or understood in terms of an "attitude" or "world view" of the narrator or author; "to the affective response and epistemic range of the spectator" (Ibid.).

I use the concept of "point of view" when discussing a physical sighting or watching. I use the concept of "perspective" when referring to how a character views events in terms of his or her thoughts and feelings, but also when refererring to his or her stance on events. It is important to note that the subjective perspective of a film character consists of much more than mere POV shots or similar technical attempts to adapt the autobiographical source material. When discussing the point of view in a film, I often equal the "point of view" to the POV shot. Still, discussing the point-of-view and the perspective simultaneously can lead to some confusion which is why I further elaborate on these terms in section 2.2.2. A related term to consider is *focalization* (first introduced by Gérard Genette in 1972, in *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method),* and later refined by Mieke Bal (Bal 2017, 132–133). However, critics have noted that in practice this term is often used in a similar way to that of *perspective*, and often so synonymously.[2] Therefore, I have chosen not to use the term "focalization" in my analysis, simply due to the confusion surrounding its use in film studies.

In film, the camera concurrently creates a barrier between the viewer and characters on screen, as well as an illusion (for example, through the point-of-view shot) of "seeing" events as if through the characters' eyes. A biographical film can therefore evoke empathy (a vicarious sharing of an affect[3]) for the character on the screen, i.e. camera brings the character closer to the viewer, but compared to autobiographical narration, film cannot offer the same level of intimacy. Some critics (e.g. Mooney, 2007) have argued that this is also the reason why something essential is *inevitably* lost when an autobiography is adapted to a biographical text (either a book or a film). (Kangur 2013, 390)

The fact that film adaptations of autobiographies aim to cinematographically relate to the individual experience of an autobiographical "I", adds a measure of "authenticity" and "experientiality" to the filmic story, thus inviting scholars to investigate how this can be achieved. Even though they make up a considerable part of film production today, film adaptations of first-person life writings such as autobiographies and memoirs have until recently received very little attention from scholars. The same can be said about adapting biographies onto screen. In adaptation studies one can currently find very little discussion around historical-biographical films as adaptations of (auto)biographical written narratives. One reason for this conspicuous lack of critical attention may be that these films fall

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2 In the latest, fourth edition of *Narratology. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2017), Bal no longer uses the term "perspective", defining "[f]ocalization [as] the relationship between the vision, the agent that sees, and that which is seen" (Bal 2017, 135).

3 As defined in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/empathy/

into a gray area between fiction and non-fiction. Adaptation studies have mostly been concentrating on fiction films and novels, although scholars have suggested to "broaden the horizons" and include other sources besides fictional.[4]

Although autobiographies contribute to the overall "history-making", they remain personal stories. Without some reference to the autobiographical "voice" in the source material, the film adaptation would become *another* story about historical-biographical event(s), a (new) interpretation of documented facts, with the added imaginary dimension. Cinema's illusion of realism nurtures the expectations of "fidelity" or authenticity, particularly if the actual historical events are portrayed and in contrast with the ontological "fictionality" of imagery (it is impossible to photograph the historical past or restore it in minute detail). To compensate for this inevitable "fictionality", the historical-biographical film invests in "human interest", that is in a personal experience of events, in the intricacies of individual life paths crossing and interweaving at critical points in history. Such personal stories may accumulate a considerable cultural potential and become important frames of cultural references due to multiple mediations and across media transfers; but they may also challenge, contest, and modify the accepted versions of history or historiographic and political "master narratives."

In what follows, I concentrate on two main issues:

Firstly, underlying the discussion are the possibilities of studying these films as adaptations using an approach similar to screen adaptations of literary works. The following films can certainly be viewed as adaptations. The question, however, is what purpose should we ascribe to films as adaptations, for example, does an adaptation add something new (e.g. added value) to the interpretation? I suggest that if these films are considered not only as historical-biographical dramas, but as adaptations of (auto)biographical writing, then this perspective changes how these works, both the film and the source texts, are perceived by the audience and the critics, illustrating also how the perception and reception of the source material is thus re-shaped through cultural discourses. A multitude of factors influence the development of historical-biographical films that include but are not limited to historical and biographical facts, various narrative representations and interpretations of these in a cultural memory, the subsequent changes that have impacted the recollection of that memory, etc. I therefore consider how film adaptations mirror the context of their release, and what this might tell us about historical-biographical films as adaptations. As I intend to demonstrate in the discussion of cultural context and audience reception, and through the addition of "traditional" comparative study of film and source texts, "fidelity criticism" still has its value.

[4] Thomas Leitch, for example, invites critics to consider how "adaptations based on nonliterary or nonfictional sourcetexts […] enlarge the range of adaptation studies by revealing the parochialism of theories that restrict their examples to films based on fictional texts?" (Leitch 2008, 67).

Secondly, as autobiographies and memoirs present the subjective experience of an autobiographical "I", in my analysis I explore how, in the process of adaptation, the first-person narration of an autobiographical "I" is rendered or modified in film texts.

The first part of my thesis consists of an introduction and an overview of historical (and biographical) film considering the perspectives of the genre, poetics of adaptation, and mass (consumer) culture. Following the introductory chapter, *the second chapter* of my thesis gives an overview of the theoretical background and conceptual framework for my approach to the discussed films. Here I will first discuss whether it is at all possible (and if so, why it might be beneficial) to consider historical-biographical films as adaptations (2.1). I include therein a general overview of theories of literary-film adaptation and some examples on the possibilities of how to approach adaptations. The final section of this chapter (2.2) presents the conceptual framework for the case studies used. This section discusses perspectives on what exactly is "adapted" in the genre of biographical film as an adaptation.

The third chapter of my thesis explores three case studies of historical-biographical fiction films.[5] I discuss the characteristics that enable these film texts to be classified as adaptations and their importance in the current (European/Anglo-American) historical-cultural discourse. The analysis focuses on whether and how the first-person perspective from the autobiographical work is rendered in film narration. And specifically, the choices that filmmakers make and how these impact on the poetics of adaptation. The highlights and critical insights into case studies are summarized in the concluding chapter.

1.1. History as entertainment: facts, fiction and the historical film

We may not be inclined to consider history – the sum of past events and the portrayal of these in narratives – as entertainment. After all, "entertainment" refers to activities which purpose is to evoke enjoyment and amusement, and narrating history should be considered a "serious business". However, the influence and thereby value of non-academic and unofficial representations of the past – in books, television, cinema and Internet sources – cannot be underestimated. According to Jerome de Groot who studies representation of history in contemporary culture:

[5] The three films I discuss here focus on the story of the main protagonist and his/her responses to challenging events in life. The story has a clear storyline and ending. All three can be characterized as fiction films according to the "classic Hollywood" criteria (see for example: Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson (2006) *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960.*

> [i]f we accept that film, TV, documentary, fiction, games, hobbies, museums and the like all have a contribution to make to a historical imaginary (they let us think and learn about the past), but further, enable a historiographical imaginary (they contribute to an understanding of how 'history' itself is constructed), then we go a long way toward understanding our contemporary cultural historicity. (de Groot 2016, 5)

Moreover, today each major event is recorded on social media channels. This means that there can no longer be a single "true" version of what happened, insofar as each person who participates in what will later be called a "historical event," has his or her own experience and understanding, and thus also *a shared story* of what has happened. Often conflicting versions of the same event simultaneously become public knowledge. An understanding of what is considered "the truth about what happened" combines both the facts and the way of communicating these facts, the representation of the events and the stories told.

Mass and social media present a staggering number of stories every day, also about the past, making it possible to engage with these stories on a personal level without actually having any personal connection to them. Today, our knowledge of history is as much based on historical films, both documentary and fictional, as it is on written history. Historical films, both in cinema and on TV, have been shaping and re-shaping the public understanding of history for a long time, often by provoking discussions and debates, but often also by merely establishing or cementing an idea of "what has really happened," which even if events are fictionalized through film, may still seem "more real" to the viewer than the history learned from academic books and museums. Therefore, many discussions on historical films have been centered around the "veracity" of the story and the "believable" representation of the past on screen. "The past" is understood here as a collection of culturally and politically established ideas, based on historical facts as represented both in academic and public sources.

In his influential book *History on Film/Film on History* (first published in 2006), Robert A. Rosenstone discusses historical film and "the visual media in general – as a legitimate way of doing history, of *historying*" (Rosenstone 2012, xviii) [my emphasis][6]. Earlier Rosenstone had argued that by accepting the historical film as the "real history", instead of disparaging it for "distorting the past", historians gain new perspectives on how to tell the history and also how public interacts with history. According to Rosenstone, film has the ability to change "the rules of the historical game". "This new historical past on film", claimed Rosenstone, "is potentially much more complex than any written text, for on screen, several things can occur simultaneously – image, sound, language, even text – elements support and work against each other to render a

[6] Rosenstone includes this introduction to the second edition of *History on Film/Film on History* also in the 3rd edition of the book (Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History,* 2018, xi-xxi)

realm of meaning as different from written history as written was from oral history." (Rosenstone 1995A, 15)

Pertaining to how public interacts with history on screen, Robert Burgoyne uses the term "re-enactment" to refer to "the act of imaginative recreation that allows the spectator to imagine they are 'witnessing again' the events of the past" (Burgoyne 2008, 7).[7] Similarily to Rosenstone, Burgoyne has pointed out that although historical films are often evaluated based on "a given film's fidelity to the historical record and its potential to mislead", the historical film's "ability to establish an emotional connection to the past" should not be underestimated (Burgoyne 2008, 1).

Concerning this, Alison Landsberg also discusses how historical fiction film, "with its multisensous mode of address," affords producing "historical knowledge", since it "draw[s] viewers in viscerally and make[s] the past matter and seem meaningful while also calling attention to both in distance from the present and to the impossibility of ever actually getting back to the past." (Landsberg, 2015, 26–27) Alison Landsberg takes an interest in how people empathically engage with remembered events, but she notes that these memories are often not based on their own experiences but obtained through mass culture. In her book *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (2004), Landsberg comments that by enabling everyone to experience historical events through memories of others, popular culture makes it possible for individuals to access the collective memory that is shaped by consuming the same products of mass culture, and personal cultural experience. (Landsberg 2004, 2)[8] This is an important consideration, since the viewer experiences the events on screen, and then, by the act of watching the film, connects these events with his or her own place and time. By bringing the characters and events of the past closer to the viewer, historical film actualizes these events, making them important *in the present moment*.[9]

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[7] Full quote: "What brings these different orders of representation – the epic, the war film, the biographical film, and the topical film – into the same discursive framework is the concept of reenactment, the act of imaginative re-creation that allows the spectator to imagine they are "witnessing again" the events of the past. The principle of reenactment constitutes the semantic register of the genre. The historical film conveys its messages about the world by reenacting the past, and it is the idea of reenactment that provides its semantic ground." (Burgoyne 2008, 7)

[8] Landsberg in her research highlights issues around how people experience the past through mass culture, by asking: "To what extent do modern technologies of mass culture, such as film, with their ability to transport individuals through time and space, function as technologies of memory? In what ways do these technologies of mass culture challenge the distinction between individual and collective memory? How do these technologies introduce the 'experiential' as an important mode of knowledge acquisition?" (Landsberg 2004, 1)

[9] This ability of connecting the past to the present is one reason why, according to historian Robert Rosenstone, engaging with history in a new way, through historical film, helps "to bring the practice of history kicking and screaming into the twenty-first century" (Rosenstone 2012, 3).

However, as Rosenstone had pointed out, even though historians have been very involved in creating and reviewing history through film, these studies had not offered an understanding on "how to evaluate the contribution of the 'historical' film to 'historical understanding'". (Rosenstone, 1995B, 5) Rosenstone has criticized studies of historical film for not thinking systematically about the concept of *historiophoty*[10] (as introduced by Hayden White) and, in his own book *History on Film/Film on History* Rosenstone sets out to do just that, "to attempt to chart the history film's rules of engagement with the past". (Rosenstone 2012, xi).

Historical films can indeed be considered as representations of "historical pluralism" which "presupposes either a number of equally plausible accounts of the historical past or, alternatively, a number of different but equally meaningful constructions" of the same historical event. (White 1986, 484) White also explained that the historical facts themselves cannot constitute a story but instead provide the "story elements". In order to become a "story", this has to be told – a process through which elements of the story (historical actuality) can be both represented and misrepresented, or concealed "by characterization, motific repetition, variation of tone, and point of view […]" (White 1978, 84).

When these scholars consider and emphasize the importance of historical film both in contemporary mass culture and in terms of how the film shapes our understanding of history, it should be noted that their views on historical film and history writing are relatively recent. That historical films and other cultural representations of history influence the public perception of the past is a given, but this widely accepted effect also constitutes the value of historical film in cultural practice, as part of *telling* history.

Historical films are not documentaries of the past and this is not what they seek to be – however much the words "based on a true story" might lead the audience towards trying to see the "accuracy" in the particular depiction of the past. As Thomas Leitch has said, the statement that film is based on a true story, is a claim that is "always strategic or generic rather than historical or existential". Film is a story, but not "the true story". (Leitch 2007, 282) This, in my opinion, does not mean that a history is *fictionalized* as it is told in a historical drama film. Film narratives, by combining facts and visions of filmmakers, with the added input from the imagination of viewers, do create a fictional world. However, history as such on screen, in cinema or on TV, fiction or documentary, is not a mere illusion of reproducing the past. In some cases, the debates that follow a controversial historical film can question the established historical truths and give a well-known fact a new interpretation from a different perspective. Still, for critics reviewing historical films, the "truth is in the story", meaning that an accurate representation of historical facts

[10] In his essay "Historiography and Historiophoty" Hayden White uses term historio*photy* in order to differ "the representation of history and our thought about it in visual images and filmic discourse" (White 1988, 1193) from "historio*graphy*" which is "the representation of history in verbal images and written discourse". (Ibid.)

is important. Simply put, there is a concern that film's story of the past will overwrite that of actual history.

Although the films I explore in following chapters do not claim to be objective, factual representations of history and/or biography – they are historical-biographical drama films and not documentaries, issues of representation and authenticity did arise in their reception. The films that I have chosen for my case studies exemplify how a historical-biographical film handles historical and biographical facts – created as fiction films, these three movies "adapt" both the historical facts and personal "truths" to offer *one* possible story, an interpretation of history, that have become part of the collective cultural memory. Naturally, the viewers are quite aware of multiple, often contesting ways in which history can be told. In her essay "Cinematic shots: the narration of violence", Janet Staiger also observes, analyzing Oliver Stone's much-criticized film *JFK* (1991), that it is not the "editing strategies" but "reading strategies" that have changed as modern audiences are aware of the *subjectivity* of historical film and the postmodern "rules of representation". (Staiger 2013, 52)

Therefore, as Staiger has said, audiences are aware of the fact that the "version of history" that is presented in film is one subjective interpretation of the past only. Furthermore, according to Rosenstone, film works differently from written text in that historical film picks out certain aspects of past events and disregards others, thus instead of "literal truths" gained from written history, historical film provides "metaphoric truths" that work as a "commentary on, and challenge to, traditional historical discourse" (Rosenstone 2012, 9).

The historical-biographical films in my case studies both contend with "real history" and present the viewers with their own interpretation of historical events. How the historical event or individual is portrayed, influences viewer perception. In the eyes of the viewers these films participate in history-making by mediating stories that "become history." What we know about particular events or how we imagine the historical person to look, act and sound like, merges with the image presented by the movie. Regarding the choices that filmmakers make in what to represent and what to discard, historian Willem Hesling refers to "cinema's selective interest in the past", and notes that the choices of filmmakers regarding what to depict and especially how, influence and further the "mythological vision" of the past:

> In their selective representation of the past historical films' stereotypes more than once fit in with prevailing values and standards within society. For good reason films, like historical novels and paintings, frequently bear witness to a nationalistic-mythological vision of the past. […] In their efforts to project the beliefs of society onto the past, such films do not hesitate to mythologize that past wherever it seems expedient. (Hesling 2001, 197; 198)

This kind of mythologizing – and what Hesling calls *canonizing* of history (Ibid.) – may seem troublesome from the point of view of an historian – as one

historical film after another uses and re-uses the same stories, creating a never-ending cycle of interpretation where subsequently it is not the historical facts as such that influence the film as a representation of history, but the filmmaker's accumulated knowledge from cultural practices.

For the audience, the importance of the historical film lies in the story that needs to be interesting and intriguing in order to fully engage the viewer. How the story is told in a historical film depends a lot on the genre and the target audience, as it is their assumptions and conventional expectations that it is designed for – dependent on whether it is a drama, a comedy, a musical, an action or a war film. There are many studies of historical film as a genre. Here historians and/or film theorists try to set genre boundaries for historical films, but these categorizations differ considerably. It is difficult to find a distinct category for "historical films", since in the broadest sense, any film set in the past could be considered historical. "History" here means anything from the past that is recognized as such. However, the "based on a true story" claim changes how a "historical film" is approached: what makes these types of films different from any film set in the past is their factuality, or "fidelity" to history.

Burgoyne, for example, categorizes film as "historical films" when "they are centered on documentable historical events, directly referring to historical occurrences through their main plotlines" (Burgoyne 2008, 43). In his book, *The Hollywood Historical Film* (2008), Burgoyne divides mainstream historical film into five categories: war films, epic films, biographical films, metahistorical films and topical films (Burgoyne 2008, 2–3; 43)

Jonathan Stubbs in his book *Historical Film. A Critical Introduction* (2013) finds that critics and researchers tend to determine genre boundaries and characterizations *based on representative films of the genre* (i.e. the kind of films they use as examples of the genre). This is an important reminder of how complex it is to "categorize" historical films. Stubbs also emphasizes that the ways in which the historical film is classified varies between academics and audiences.[11] In his view, one should understand historical film as a genre not by looking for common denominators, but rather by considering the genre "as a discursive practice centered on an unavoidably diverse body of films." (Stubbs 2013, 3) However, Stubbs warns against considering a film historical simply because it is set in the past and depicts historical events. Here, he argues that the connection to history in historical films is established not only in the film texts themselves, but also in the film's placement within a cultural context and discourse. Further, Stubbs emphasizes that commercial aspects of producing historical fiction films are also important in their cultural placement. He views historical film as "a series of small-scale, historically specific film cycles which emerge from particular commercial contexts and are shaped by larger cultural forces." (Stubbs 2013, 13) Indeed, what cinema tells us about history through

[11] Besides the complexities of how exactly to characterize and categorize the historical films, Stubbs also emphasizes that, in all discussions, the historical film shows its "strong cultural presence". (Stubbs 2013, 11)

historical films, has perhaps less to do with idealistic, artistic and political reasons or social consciousness of the filmmakers, and much to do with expected commercial gains.

I find that what makes a film a "historical film" is the assessment and acceptance by the viewers. This implies that the viewer has some previous understanding and "historical knowledge" to rely on, or that the viewer gains this knowledge from the film itself. However, the possession of that knowledge, or lack thereof, also shapes how the viewer interprets the historical film and how the film changes existing comprehension of the history depicted. For example, *Retrovisions: Reinventing the Past in Film and Fiction* tells us that "we might say that history is the invention of creative artists as much as an objective record of true events" (Cartmell, Hunter and Whelehan 2001, 1).

The films discussed here are good examples of both historical drama films and their effects on viewers' understanding of history. They illustrate how different sociopolitical norms have changed this understanding and how this manifests both in the film text and its interpretations. Following Cartmell's and Hunter's idea that "history is the invention of creative artists" one can view the films discussed here as artistic portrayals of historic individuals and/or events, and also as a process of history-making, *historying* (as Rosenstone (2012) has characterized it). Therefore, the question: "is the movie telling a true story?" (or: "did it really happen like that?") has its place in the discussion of these films.

To summarize, the historical fiction films impact on public notions of history and shape the "historical imaginary" of society. Historical films affect viewer perceptions and ideas of history through the "imaginative re-enactment" endorsed and enhanced by generic and narrative structures that attract viewer's attention, incite curiosity and desire for knowledge. Concurrently, these films employ familiar conventions and frames that curb and guide viewer perceptions and emotions. Generic conventions also serve marketing and advertising purposes. Narrative and imaginative interest combined with the "truth value" is, obviously, a major cause of the historical film's appeal. As the following case studies demonstrate, none of the films selected can be categorized under genre conventions in a straightforward manner. Still, certain choices made by filmmakers warrant these films to be viewed within the framework of a "genre": *The Pianist* as a "Holocaust film", *A Woman in Berlin* as a war drama (including a heroine, hero and their love story), and *Hamsun* as a "biopic" film. Labelling these films does provide some information on how these works are interpreted, produced and consumed as adaptations.

1.2. Biographical film: history and biography on screen

I employ the term "historical-biographical film" regarding my case studies. The "historical biopic"[12] is a term commonly applied to films that tell a story about the life of an individual in a historical setting. The historical setting or the life story can be the focus of the film, but most often historical-biographical films concentrate on historical events *as viewed through* the life experiences of a an individual, a protagonist of the story.

In common knowledge, "biopic" refers to a movie that depicts the life of a real individual, either from the past or from present day. The use of the term "biopic" differs from source to source, as is also the case with what is considered a "historical film".[13] For example, the much-discussed movie *Schindler's List* (1993, directed by Steven Spielberg) has been characterized as belonging to the genres of historical drama, biographical drama, Holocaust movie, and discussed as a film adaptation under all these categories. Burgoyne uses *Schindler's List* as an example of a biographical film as a sub-genre of a historical film.[14] In his discussion of *Schindler's List*, Burgoyne emphasizes the role of "biofilms" in movie industry in general, and as historical films in particular, since these films render personal experiences of real individuals who have experienced important historical events. However, the individual experience is still at the core of the story in the biographical film and, as it is based on the individual story, the biographical film differs from other historical films (if such distinction really applies). Or, as Belen Vidal has summarized:

> Unlike in other film genres placed at the intersection of fiction and history, such as the epic, the costume film, or the docudrama – all of which may feature historical characters and biographical tropes – in the biopic an individual's story comes to the fore. Personality and point of view become the conduit of history in stories that often boil down complex social processes to gestures of individual agency. (Vidal 2014, 3) [my emphasis]

As Vidal sees it (and it seems obvious to me as well), biopic first and foremost refers to a story of *an individual*, although often presented in a historical setting wherein the history is the backdrop, or it may be the story of how individual choices influence the course of history. Concentrating on the biographical, for example, the heroism of an individual portrayed in film may show the historical event as part of *his or her story*. (Vidal 2014, 3)

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[12] Although it is sometimes employed (e.g. Burgoyne, 2008; Rosenstone, 2012), "biofilm" is not as commonly used a term to refer to the biographical films as is "biopic" ("biography" + "picture"), at least not in Anglo-American use.

[13] In comparison, see Stubb's (2013) issues with genre characterizations regarding historical films (cited here in previous chapter).

[14] "Illuminating the trauma of the historical past by focusing on an individual life, the film rehearses the generic patterns of the "biofilm," a form that has been an important and underappreciated part of the cinema's repertory of historical imagining." (Burgoyne 2008, 102)

Similarly to historical films, biographical films engage the viewer through facts – by claims that the story *really* happened. Biographical films are often highly regarded by critics and audiences evidenced by award nominations. Still, in mainstream cinema "biopic" has for a long time been undervalued as a "genre". Perhaps this is why – even though "biopics" or films with strong biographical elements that are "based on a true life story" have been very popular with audiences and prize committees for some time – research on this genre is quite recent.

One of the first prominent studies into biopics was *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History* (1992) by George F. Custen. This study focused on (Hollywood) studio productions and assessed around 300 biopics from 1927 to mid-century. In Custen's view, the Hollywood "biopic" is a biography on screen in its most classical sense, often representing the whole life story of a historically, politically or a culturally significant person. However, Custen viewed these biopics – and who they chose to portray – to be highly controlled by the Hollywood studio system.[15] (Custen 1992) It is the "biopic" as a genre stemming from the Hollywood studios, that Burgoyne also considers "perhaps the most familiar form of cinematic historiography […] by far the largest subgenre of historical filmmaking", that still "has been seen as a conservative, mainstream form, an aesthetic embarrassment". (Burgoyne 2008, 16) Here, Burgoyne refers to the long-maintained view adopted by film critics and scholars that these films, by employing a fixed formula of storytelling, have little to offer to cinema as *art*.

Although biographical films – especially outside of the genre framework of Hollywood productions – have not received much scholarly attention in the past, this picture has been rapidly changing over the past decade. In *Whose Lives Are They Anyway? The Biopic as Contemporary Film Genre* from 2010, Dennis Bingham in his introduction to this "respectable genre of very low repute," (Bingham 2010, 3) does not view the term "biopic" to be derogatory in any way. Rather, he sees it as a genre in its own right: "[t]he biopic is a genuine, dynamic genre and an important one. The biopic narrates, exhibits, and celebrates the life of a subject in order to demonstrate, investigate, or question his or her importance in the world; […]" (Bingham 2010, 10)

When selecting the films for analysis in her recent book *Bio-pics: A Life in Pictures (Short Cuts)*, Ellen Cheshire asks a question that summarizes the problem with "biopics": "Is the bio-pic a genre in its own right?" She provides the following rationale for her selection:

> The films being examined in the case studies included here are ones where real names have been used, ones where the filmmakers have made a conscious choice to tell the story of a known person, and where audiences arriving at a cinema would have previous knowledge or expectation of what they are likely to see. If the subject is new to them, they would be able to

[15] According to Custen, it was "a producer's genre". (Custen 1992, 15)

> leave safe in the knowledge that further research could be undertaken to determine the veracity of the film. (Cheshire 2015, 6) [my emphasis] [16]

In *The Biopic in Contemporary Film Culture*, Belen Vidal also finds that, for the viewer of a biographical film, certain evidence of veracity is necessary: "Regardless of the audience's degree of prior knowledge about the subject portrayed, it is the fundamental link to historical fact that seals the generic contract between producers and audiences of biographical film fictions, with the attendant pleasures of recognition." (Vidal 2014, 3) [my emphasis].

To summarize, there are different views on what "biopic" is and what the criteria to identify screen works as "biographical" are. However, I find it logical to assume that if a film aims to be "biographical" then it must be "based on a true-*life* story".

What distinguishes the so-called "biopics" from documentary biographies on screen is the limited artistic license that moviemakers have in portraying a person. In film, the motives and emotions of an actual individual are presented "as reality", and the general factual information about time and circumstances might fall to the background in comparison to the personal drama. Here, the biopic and documentary biography on screen share the same issues. Today, biographies are viewed as if located somewhere between fact and fiction. Ira Bruce Nadel pointed out the irony of the development of biographical narrative as an aesthetic form of writing:

> In many ways, however, the completeness of biography, the achievement of its professionalization, is an ironic fiction, since no life can ever be known completely, or would we want to know every fact about an individual. Similarly, no life is ever lived according to aesthetic proportions. The 'plot' of a biography is superficially based on the birth, life and death of the subject; 'character' on the vision of the author. Both are as much creations of the biographer, as they are of the novelist. We content ourselves with 'authorized fictions'. (Nadel 1984, 100).

In the wake of Nadel's and Bourdieu's critique of the "biographical illusion", there was a shift of interest from the literary (aesthetic) biography to the mock biography and various pseudo-biographical forms and mystifications (see for example Grishakova 2012). In his *Fiction & Diction*, Genette mentions Hildesheimer's *Marbot* as "the fictitious biography of an imaginary writer who purports to take on all the constraints (and all the ruses) of the most 'veridical historiography'" (Genette 1993, 81).

On the other hand, biography as a nonfictional genre is often viewed as a form of historiography, since both historians and biographers share the truth value of their writings, and are expected to research and critically consider the

[16] The historical-biographical film could be defined as a true personal story on screen, whereby the viewer either recognizes the story or is able to verify it later. The same concept of being able to "recognize" and "compare" (or verify), applies also to film adaptations.

selection of materials that form the groundwork for their story. Obviously, a lot of weight in the biographical work lies therefore with the author, the biographer. The choices made by the biographer determine the end result – what kind of biography will it be? And what about film-making, a complex and multi-faceted activity that includes numerous inputs from different participants? The makers of biographical films often conduct as much research in preparation of their films as do filmmakers and writers of documentary biographies. Producers, directors, screenwriters, actors, costume designers, makeup-artists, location managers, and others all contribute to the "moving pictures" that portray an actual person, past or present. Who then is the biographer? As I see it, the choices of biographers (or a team undertaking research to publish a written form of biography) are similar to the choices of filmmakers. And, since the subject matter indeed is the life of an actual person then similar ethical, aesthetical and truth value judgements (and also *conflicts*) apply.

2. (AUTO)BIOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND (FILM) ADAPTATION

2.1. The historical-biographical film as adaptation?

Dudley Andrew, referring to arguments made by Hayden White in *Metahistory* (1973), argues for treating all "historical films as adaptations, particularly now that so many historians […] consider their work to be largely that of re-creation, re-presentation, and textual elaboration."[17] (Andrew 2004, 191) Andrew suggests that for such an approach, "the key cases to consider would be those films daring to take on prominent historical topics". (Ibid.) The following case studies represent issues around these "prominent historical topics". However, when Andrew provokes us to consider *all* historical films as adaptations, I am inclined to ask: what specifically are these films adapting?[18] Furthermore, how can we then define adaptation? Since numerous descriptions of (film) adaptation can be found, and the current debate on adaptation theory expands beyond the literature-film discourse, I find it necessary in the following to provide some background and a rationale for my use of the term *film adaptation*, including a brief overview of the scholarly discussion of adaptation studies and main theoretical approaches relevant to this thesis.

[17] Here, Andrew also notes that the process of creating an historical film is two-fold: "[t]he link that Paul Ricouer forged between the writing of history and of fiction becomes far more evident in the case of adaptation where the debt owed to the traces of the past by the historian is analogous to the onus felt by the filmmaker to respect some text from the cultural storehouse." (Andrew 2004, 191) [my emphasis]

[18] Highly acclaimed historical war dramas from Hollywood like *The Thin Red Line* (1998, directed by Terrence Malick) or *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006, directed by Clint Eastwood) are examples of films that are based on historical events, but to an extent also on autobiographical writings. *The Thin Red Line* is an adaptation of a novel by James Jones (1962) with the same title, employing fictional characters, but based on his personal wartime experiences. *Letters from Iwo Jima* has an original script written by Iris Yamashita that also relies on personal accounts (e.g. diaries, letters, memoirs, photographic material). One film is an adaptation, the other is not. However, both have some clearly identifiable source texts. These films also illustrate the complex nature of adaptation and the question – what exactly is that gets adapted? Is it the story about a group of soldiers, as in novel by James Jones, or historical knowledge about the events of the Guadalcanal Campaign, the story told in *The Thin Red Line*? As in the latter we see the events through the eyes of General Tadamichi Kuribayashi, to what extent are these accounts based on his letters from the island of Iwo Jima? Indeed, the definition of adaptation becomes much broader in films that are based on true personal stories relevant to significant historical events.

2.1.1. Approaches to film adaptations

From the beginning of cinema, we can find film adaptations of all types of literary sources be it poems, plays, short stories or novels. Not surprisingly, numerous winners of various film awards have been adaptations. Film adaptations are popular and receive much attention from the public, film critics, literary scholars, and in the case of historical films, also historians. A film adaptation of a written text – especially if the source text is well known and appreciated, inherently invites comparisons to the "original". This comparison often leads to evaluating the film based on how it has managed to "stay true" to the adapted material. Often, when the film adaptation has been found to be lacking in its fidelity to the source material, by logical assumption it has then been noted that something of critical importance in the original text has been "lost" in the adaptation process. Thus, for the general audience, film critics and researchers, the question of fidelity to the source text – the elements omitted, added and the ability of the film to remain "true to the spirit of the original work" – remains a key question. Indeed, much of the early studies of adaptations focused on the film's fidelity to its source text, by drawing comparisons between the "source" and the "target" (film) texts. The search for similarities and differences between two texts tended to predominate in these studies. George Bluestone proposed in his *Novels Into Film* (1957): "If we can fix upon those elements in the film version that carried over from their source, and those which depart from it, we ought, in the process, to illuminate the essential limits and possibilities of film and novel both" (Bluestone 2003, 68). As a written story is adapted to screen, adjustments and changes are inevitable, albeit not solely because of the differences between the two narrative mediums. The "fidelity criticism" in adaptation studies has been concerned with identifying these changes and assessing their meaning. Bluestone did consider novel and its film adaptation as separate creative works, each with own aesthetic value, but he also noted that the conventions of the film genre and film industry, and the demands of mass audience ("the society's shaping power" (Bluestone 2003, 44)) limit film adaptations.

But what exactly in the "original" (or which elements from the original) should the adaptation stay faithful to? Or, as Robert Stam has asked, "Fidelity to what?" (Stam 2000, 57) The viewing of literary text as the "original", and the adaptation as addressing that original, often leads to a value statement regarding the "original" with the adaptation simply being a "copy". Adding to this is the debate of "respectability" from classical literature versus film as a product for mass entertainment. These types of comparisons create what James Naremore has referred to as "binary oppositions" in studies of adaptations, that is "literature versus cinema, high culture versus mass culture, original versus copy" (Naremore 2000, 2).

However, studying film adaptations of popular literary texts simply invites us to compare and contrast the book and the film *as texts*. What has changed over time in adaptation studies, is that these textual analyses of written and film

texts currently involve more than only literature-to-film adaptations. Due to the broadening of the field of adaptation studies, a plethora of various new approaches to interpreting and theorizing adaptations have appeared, or as Robert Stam has said:

> Adaptation theory by now has available a well-stocked archive of tropes and concepts to account for the mutation of forms across media: adaptation as reading, rewriting, critique, translation, transmutation, metamorphosis, recreation, transvocalization, signifier, performance, dialogization, cannibalization, reinvisioning, incarnation, or reaccentuation. Each term, however problematic as a definitive account of adaptation, sheds light on a different facet of adaptation. (Stam 2005, 25)[19]

The conceptual and methodological shift has also led to the broadening (and, based on the quotation above, certain blurring of understanding what we are dealing with) regarding the term "adaptation", and furthermore, "adaptation theory". The quotation from Robert Stam above seems to suggest that the field of adaptation studies is a fertile ground that fosters new approaches and conflicting theories. Still, some authors, for example, Kamilla Elliott (2013)[20] regard that adaptation studies "resist" theorization. Their stance is that although various theoretical approaches exist (that focus on key questions like fidelity, authorship, intertextuality, and so on), the issues and perspectives in adaptation studies are too numerous and versatile to attempt a singular theory. For example, whereas Thomas Leitch in his essay "Twelve Fallacies in the Contemporary Adaptation Theory" (2003) emphasizes the need to consider whether "[t]here is such a thing as contemporary adaptation theory" (Leitch 2003, 149), ten years later, Kamilla Elliott in her overview of adaptation theories, states in a straightforward manner: "Few attempts have been made to establish a theory of adaptation; no one who has done so claims that his/her theory covers every aspect of adaptation" (Elliott 2013, 30).

Adaptation studies have always faced challenges relevant to the nature of adaptation, its limitations and possibilities. There are many different approaches to studying adaptations, and the multitude of possibilities presented in the field owns, in my opinion, much to the fact that "what adaptation is" can in itself be understood in broad terms. In Linda Hutcheon's definition, for example, "an adaptation" must present itself as "[a]n acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works" and adaptation also needs to be both a "creative *and* interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging" that furthermore, enter

[19] For example, adaptations have been considered as interpretations (Carroll 2009), appropriations (Sanders 2006), intertexts (McFarlane 1996), remediations (Grønstad 2017), from the perspective of intermediality (Bruhn, Gjelsvik and Hanssen 2013), reception (Scholz 2013), and so on.

[20] "Adaptations, adaptations scholars and adaptations studies have not only failed theories; theories have also failed them. Rather than solely adapting adaptation to theories, theories also need to adapt to adaptations." (Elliott 2013, 31-32)

into "extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work" (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013, 8). Hutcheon's approach in *A Theory of Adaptation* (published originally in 2006) extended the field of adaptation studies far beyond the literature-film comparisons. Then again, as Hutcheon stresses, while an adaptation needs to be "acknowledged" as such, it also sets certain limitations to what could be defined as adaptations. However, Hutcheon's approach views adaptation studies within a larger intertextual and contextual discourse – something that James Naremore in his introduction to anthology *Film Adaptation* (2000) invited to do: to join adaptation studies "with the study of recycling, remaking, and every other form of retelling in the age of mechanical reproduction and electronic communication" (Naremore 2000, 15).[21]

Rachel Carroll in her introduction to the collection of essays from 2009, *Adaptation in Contemporary Culture,* states that "[a] film or television adaptation of a prior cultural text – no matter how "faithful" in intention or aesthetic – is inevitably an *interpretation* of that text: to that extent, every adaptation is an instance of textual *in*fidelity" (Carroll 2009, 1). Taking this statement one step further, we can infer that when we leave the matter of fidelity aside, adaptation can be viewed as one possible interpretation of a text in cultural circulation. Likewise, one interpretation often finds inspiration from other interpretations: by contest or confirmation, and by participation in the cultural discourse, it also influences how the source material is further interpreted.[22] Therefore, as Jørgen Bruhn emphasizes, there is a need to "establish a new relation between source and result in adaptation studies" (Bruhn 2013, 72). I agree with his observation that both the source text and adaptation could be considered as "sources for each other in the ongoing work of the reception in the adaptational process." Bruhn calls this conceptualization "*dialogizing adaptation studies*"[23] and suggests that a novel to film adaptation study "is the systematic study of the process of novels being turned into film, focusing on both the change of the content and form from novel to film and the changes being inferred on the originating text." (Bruhn 2013, 73)

This is an important notion in contemporary "post-literary age", since (film) adaptations almost always create a "two-way" connection, as they often shed new light on the source material and/or introduce the original text to wider

[21] In his introductory chapter ("Introduction: Film and the Reign of Adaptation"), when discussing his selection of essays for the anthology and how studies of film adaptations have been very focused on popular and well-known literary texts, he stresses that: "In addition to expanding the kinds of texts we take into account, we need to augment the metaphors or translations and performance with the metaphor of intertextuality, or with what M. M. Bakhtin called 'dialogic'." (Naremore 2000, 12)

[22] Or as John Bryant has formulated this in his essay "Textual identity and adaptive revision: Editing adaptation as a fluid text": "The announced retellings of adaptation (and translation as well) are interpretive creations, which, as readers' revisions, are homologous versions that find shelter under the ever-lifting umbrella of the further *workings* associated with an originating text." (Bryant 2013, 54)

[23] See also Naremore (2000).

audiences (for example by the transfer of attention from national to international audiences).

Viewing adaptation as a dialogic or intertextual process is not a new concept. Julie Sanders, in her book *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006), views the adaptation and appropriation process as a "sub-section of the over-arching practice of intertextuality" (Sanders 2006, 17) by often "offering commentary on a source text", with an audience in mind – meaning that this "commentary" serves a purpose of either revising the original or revitalizing it for new audiences. (Sanders 2006, 18)[24] Brian McFarlane in his 1996 *Novel to Film. An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* suggested viewing adaptations as an intertextual practice, substantiating this by how audiences relate to the adaptation and adapted work. McFarlane has further pointed out that the "precursor text", be it a novel, play or a poem, is only one component that signifies a film's intertextuality, and it is not always of central importance to the viewer. Contemporaneous cinematic styles and practices, the preferences of filmmakers, the prestige of the star actors, may all be equally or more important in the reception process. "The way we respond to any film will be in part the result of those other texts and influences we inescapably bring to bear on our viewing." (McFarlane 2007, 26–27)

In *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions* (2013), editors Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen in discussing the latest developments in theories of adaptation place a special emphasis on analytical practice. They distinguish between five "clusters" of approaches in adaptation studies. These include: 1) "the question of fidelity," 2) extension of the field "to a broader variety of media relations beyond the usual novel-to-film", 3) considerations of adaptation as a phenomenon that has a "multilevel rather than a one-to-one relationship" (between the source and the adaptation), 4) participation in a "dialogic process" (of communication between the source and the adaptation), and 5) invitation to "examine the way that global theoretical frameworks (intermediality or genetic criticism, for example) can be used in adaptation studies". (Bruhn, Gjelsvik and Hanssen 2013, 4–5)

In my opinion, these "five clusters" aptly summarize the different practical approaches in adaptation studies that are also relevant today. Although Bruhn, Gjelsvik and Hanssen see the fidelity question in adaptation studies to no longer be relevant, neither in theory nor in practice, they note that "the issue of similarities and differences is still very much present in contemporary research (Ibid.). Simply put, even when one does not talk about the "fidelity to the source text", discussions of similarities and differences amount to a similar approach, simply "more neutral" and no longer assuming that the (literary) source text as an original has more (artistic) value than the (film) adaptation (Ibid.). "Fidelity", they summarize, "is questioned but not forgotten in current research,

[24] Viewing adaptation as an intertext is what Thomas Leitch has also proposed in his famous essays "Twelve Fallacies in the Contemporary Adaptation Theory" (2003) and "Adaptation Studies at a Crossroads" (2008).

where it constantly resurfaces in the form of questions of medium specificity based on non-evaluative grounds." (Bruhn, Gjelsvik and Hanssen 2013, 6)

Even though I agree with the assessment that adaptation studies have moved away from "fidelity criticism" – I find that in practice the evaluation aspect is still present, for example, in discussions of how the audience understands the film compared to the book. I perceive the "fidelity criticism" as an inherent consequence of comparing two texts. However, the value or importance of the film adaptation as a standalone work of art is not diminished by viewer criticism (particularly in regard to the elements added or omitted in the adapted work that may result in that the film narrative somewhat differs from the story in the original text).

In *From Fidelity to History: Film Adaptations as Cultural Events in the Twentieth Century* (2013), Anne-Marie Scholz argues that in denouncing the "fidelity criticism", adaptation theorists seem to "protest too much" against the traditional fidelity model by opposing it with a sheer impenetrable wall of alternative concepts." (Scholz 2013, 2) According to Scholz, even though film adaptation represents "intertextual dialogism", the "concrete material interests, political and ideological differences, and power relations based upon such variables as gender, nationality, and class all mould the ways texts are transformed into other media and received by audiences in very concrete, materialistic ways." (Scholz 2013, 3) In her analysis, Scholz relies on Barbara Klinger's and Janet Steiger's methodology of reception study and defines film adaptation

> […] as a form of reception throughout the work – on the three-tiered level of, first, the relation between the literary work and the film director and production teams, second, between literary work, film and historically specific audience reception; and, thirds, between the films and my own readings […] (Ibid.)

I find Scholz's approach to studying film adaptations especially relevant, considering how she identifies the "three-tiered levels" of film adaptation, wherein equal importance is given to the filmmaker, to the audience (in terms of both the context of production and reception) and to the concrete individual interpreter. Although I do not follow Scholz's approach directly in my case studies, her proposal on how to study adaptations has greatly influenced my understanding. Specifically, Scholz proposes to approach "the classic case studies" with a purpose "to demonstrate the ways in which film adaptation can function as a kind of a cultural strategy for grappling with different types of social and cultural change." She suggests that, by conducting such research, the study of adaptations illuminates "the changing social and cultural circumstances […] offers inroads into reading […] films in a novel way." (Ibid.) (Since the source material is separated by several decades from film adaptations that I am discussing in my case studies, these changes are clearly illuminated in both the production and reception context.)

When discussing film and television in media studies, much attention is given to the production process, the importance of which for adaptation studies is apparent (see for example George Bluestone's quote above). According to Jack Boozer (*Authorship in Film Adaptation*, 2008), using material (copyrighted texts) for adaptation (e.g. creating a "script based on someone else's published work") requires funding and includes "financial risk that most individuals outside the Hollywood money loop cannot afford" (Boozer 2008, 19). Thus, from the very beginning of the adaptation process it is a question of investment and therefore profit (either monetary or recognition). So, adaptations can be and are considered from the perspectives of production and producer. Similarily, Simone Murray in her book *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation* (2012) sets out to "materialize" adaptation studies. As the title suggests, without delving into comparative textual analysis, Murray examines how and why the adaptations are *produced* as forms of culture. I find this approach interesting, since the box office indeed determines the success of most film productions today; and how the films are marketed (including the films that I discuss herein), determines their reception to a great effect. This is especially relevant, considering that in the case of a film adaptation, the source text, be it fiction or non-fiction, is often re-entered to the market just before or after the film release. As such, both works become intertwined and dependent on each other's success, at least in marketing terms.

The historical, political, cultural and social context influences how the text is received and understood at different times and places. This invites again to question how the adaptation presents itself as an adaptation, and if so, then why: what is the reception of the adaptation by the audience and critics, how does this reception vary over time and across cultural contexts, and which other texts besides the obvious source influence the film adaptation?

According to Linda Hutcheon, there "must be something particularly appealing about adaptations *as adaptations*" (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013, 4). She explains adaptation to be a process of "repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with piquancy of surprise. Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change." (Ibid.) Regarding the texts discussed in the following case studies, this notion is especially relevant, as "the work we know" – the pleasure and surprise of recognition – can be experienced both when regarding the (auto)biographical source text, as well as the "real-life story" behind the film adaptation.

Besides the question of how a (literary) work is transformed through cinematic adaptation, it is also relevant to ask *why* this takes place at all? Is it, as can be understood from Linda Hutcheon's arguments above, the comfort of meeting the recognizable? Or perhaps, as Brian McFarlane has phrased it, "the lure of a pre-sold title, the expectation of that respectability or popularity" (McFarlane 1996, 7), attracts both the adapters and the audiences? Hutcheon has explained this, as follows: "when giving meaning and value to an adaptation as an adaptation, audiences operate in a context that includes their knowledge and

their own interpretation of the adapted work. That context may also include information about the adapter, thanks to both journalistic curiosity and scholarly digging." (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013, 111)

One could conclude that film adaptation does not only consist of a story (presented on screen), but also of marketing and reception, the "popularity" of the cast, and naturally, the fame and prestige of the film director and the production company, all of which add to the overall effect. In examples chosen here, leading actors and film directors, their status and past films are considered by various film reviewers. Therefore, the adaptation cannot be viewed, in my opinion, as *text only,* but must include the context of production and reception.

The generic, narrative, and structural information in the film could orient the viewer as to what to expect as well as how to interpret the film, but equally important is the information the viewer has about the film beforehand. Obviously, understanding of the social and political context is necessary for analyzing both production and reception of texts. For example, the selected methods of production and marketing of a film adaptation influence its reception. But the reception (and potential criticism) might open both the source text and its adaptation up to re-interpretation in a way that further influences how these texts are presented to the public in the future. Various (both textual and visual) media accounts give an idea of how an adaptation was both presented (and marketed), and how it was received[25] (since both advertising and critique influence the viewers). Finally, a scholarly film review and interpretation are also specific forms of reception. All the above contributes to the general historical/social/cultural discourse around a film adaptation.

2.1.2. Historical-biographical film as an adaptation of a "historical life"?

How can we determine whether a historical-biographical film can be viewed as an adaptation or a "based-on-a-true-story" film (as an "adaptation [or translation, modification] of reality", so to speak)? Moreover, could these processes perhaps be considered one and the same? I have discussed multiple approaches to the study of adaptations above. In addition, the fiction/non-fiction prism through which the (auto)biography and "based on a true story" films are seen, offers further possibilities for interpretation. Concerning biographical film as biography, I note that the biographer and the author of a biographical film make use of the same type of source materials, face the same values and conflicting choices regarding ethics and aesthetics of presenting a true-life story. If the biographer (for example, in the case of Knut Hamsun's portrayal, as presented by Thorkild Hansen and its film adaptation by Jan Troell, see chapter 3.3) uses

[25] However, as Janet Staiger has noted: "Each textual method has advantages and deficits, but these advantages do not include objectivity. […] Texts such as reviews are produced for one reason and appropriated by reception scholars for another." (Staiger 2005, 14)

an autobiographical novel as a source material for accessing information about the person portrayed in the biographical work, then this is not considered to be the same as adapting the autobiographical novel onto screen. In my opinion, if a historical-biographical film is produced and marketed as an adaptation, meaning with an identifiable (published) source text, it is also considered by the audience as such (an adaptation). However, if the film does not state that it is "based on" a certain source, how then to approach these historical-biographical films? Does one need to conduct some "biographical detective work" in order to determine whether the unpublished (auto)biographical materials, letters, documents and other historical sources constitute "adapted texts" as well? And can the historical-biographical films, as they make use of these materials, thus be considered adaptations?

In other words, what exactly does it mean when a fiction film is told to be "based on a true story"? In her essay "Tracing the originals, pursuing the past: *Invictus* and the "based-on-a-true-story" film as adaptation", Sara Brinch also asks the questions that have inspired my research on the matters of adapting autobiographical non-fictional narratives onto screen. "When does a historical fiction film become a film based on a true story?", she asks and then turns this question around: "*When* do we actually think of a historical film as adaptation?" According to Brinch, "most people never do, except when recalling an account's *specific perspective* on the past by reading a book or seeing an image they already know to be the film's precursor text." (Brinch 2013, 237)

I find this discussion most relevant when viewing the films in context of their source texts, the (auto)biographical writings, since here two important factors enter the dialogue: the (identifiable) source text, and the historical and biographical past in general. If one is familiar with the source text, comparing the perspectives on historical event(s) in the source and adapted materials is a naturally occurring process.

The discussion above refers to the historical-biographical film as adaptation in essence, without (an) identifiable "source text(s)". Thomas Leitch calls this the "non-existent precursor texts"[26] – as the precursor texts do not exist, these "true stories" are not "found, fully formed as such", but "created […] through the very act of invoking them." (Leitch 2007, 302) However, Sara Brinch disputes this notion and argues that even Leitch's own examples (like Leitch's discussion of *Schindler's List*) *do have* (existing, published and marketed) "precursor texts" and that "[e]ven if the original is not always as clearly pronounced as in the case of *Schindler's List*, a based-on-a-true-story film at least would have to rely on some sort of source, if not a literary one, to be

[26] "Based on a true story' indicates a source text that both is and is not a text, one that carries some markers common to most source texts but not others. […] The phrase 'based on a true story' begins with an ambiguous verb – just what does it mean to be 'based' on a true story? what sort of fidelity to the historical record is offered? – and ends with the implication that even before the film was made, a story was circulating that was not only about actual events but was a true account of them, as if extracting a story from actual events or imposing a story on them was unproblematic." (Leitch 2007, 281; 283)

regarded as having a reference to a true story at all." (Brinch 2013, 238) [my emphasis]

However, when the fiction film is marketed both as historical, based on real events, and as an adaptation of a specific non-fiction source text (like the film examples used in the following discussion), the audience approaches these films simultaneously *as adaptations* and *as historical-biographical films*. The audience considers these films as adaptations even though they "have never read the book" simply because of the marketing strategy or because they know that the film is based on, or inspired by, a specific published written text. Thusly, the film gains a certain "truth value" both as being an adaptation of an already established and thus a culturally processed text (making use of a "pre-sold title", as Brian McFarlane has said it). Consequently, since the source text is non-fiction, the film's "truth claim" is further strengthened.

It is rather common, as discussed in the previous chapter on historical film and the issues aorund its place in the contemporary cultural discourse, to approach all historical films from the perspective of their "truth value" and the ever-present fact-versus-fiction debate. The same problem also pertains to biographical films (be they stories of historical life or contemporary ones). Again, Thomas Leitch has argued that "[t]he point of claiming that a film is based on a true story is not to establish truth or fidelity to the truth as a predicate of the discourse but to use the category of the true story as a privileged master text that justifies the film's claims to certain kinds of authority – ideally by placing them beyond question." (Leitch 2007, 286) For Leitch, the truth claim is a legitimizing strategic or generic device that endorses suspension of disbelief by the viewer, because one cannot expect the film to be an accurate record of historical events. It simply means that "even before the film was made, a story was circulating that was not just about actual events but was a true story account of them, as if extracting a story from actual events or imposing a story on them was not unproblematic" (Leitch 2007, 283)

Márta Minier and Maddalena Pennacchia in *Adaptation, Intermediality and the British Celebrity Biopic* (2013) consider "biopics" as adaptations, seemingly following Dudley Andrew's invitation to subsume all historical films under the category of adaptations, meaning that no "precursor texts" are necessary, as (historical)-biographical narratives circulate in the public sphere and are not necessarily defined as textual sources. Referring to Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation* (2006), Minier and Pennacchia also, in my opinion very aptly, ask what exactly "the adapted text" in the case of biographical film might be:

> It is a life, the story of a life, naturally, that is being retold, but in what format is that encountered by the makers of the biopic, or – in other words – what are the 'sources', what constitute the 'original' of the biopic as an adaptation? (Minier and Pennacchia 2016, 7)

Although Minier and Pennacchia admit that looking at biopics as adaptations of a life story "may come across as a slightly unorthodox proposition first" (Ibid.),

based on the points referred above, one can argue that in the broader picture it is not unorthodox at all. Referring to Linda Hutcheon's approach to adaptations, they claim, however, that

> [...] on close inspection, the biopic as a form appears to be the adaptation *par excellence*. All major theoretical and pragmatic concerns we have with adaptation can be raised with regard to the biopic, too, be these related to the problematically fuzzy concepts of fidelity, authenticity, source versus target or other ontologically oriented debates about such productions. (Ibid.)

This is not a position taken in the majority of studies on biography on screen. However, the way Minier and Pennacchia approach biographical films as adaptations, with or without a concrete, identifiable source text, demonstrates that it is indeed possible to view *all* historical-biographical films as adaptations. One could still ask, what purpose should this approach serve? There are two linked reasons for this. First is a heuristic justification, since we have seen that these films adapt historical and biographical materials. Secondly, considering historical-biographical films as adaptations may improve our understanding of how they mirror social, political and cultural changes in society, for example, when venturing to controversial historical characters and/or historical events (as these individuals experienced these events themselves).

Linda Hutcheon has explained how audiences recognize (film) adaptations as "directly openly connected to recognizable other works, and that connection is part of their formal identity, but also of what we might call their hermeneutic identity" (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013, 21). In addition to being able to recognize concrete texts, the audience is also able to "recognize that a work is an adaptation of more than one specific text." (Ibid.) "Based on the true-life story" films do not offer that connection to "other works", but offer a connection to (many) other stories. In case of historical-biographical films, these intertextual connections might add to the understanding of the past. However, William Hesling makes an important argument that "(f)ilms, in their representation of the past, more often seem to refer to each other than to the past itself." He calls this relationship "incestuous dynamic of quoting and recycling", mainly caused by the media industry's concerns with production value and marketing success, the "two economic principles" of "production and imitation of former successes". (Hesling 2001, 195) For Hesling, thus the question is of intertextuality, imitation, "quoting and recycling", rather than of viewing historical films as adaptations.

One important premise in this thesis is the possibility of discussing the following films as adaptations in a way that is similar to discussing fictional literary works adapted to screen. The film examples discussed in my case studies are, indeed, directly defined as *adaptations* by their makers. (Even though it might be considered a very basic definition, if in the titles the film is advised as "based on" or made "after…" the [auto]biographical books, the

question whether these films *could* be considered adaptations seems unnecessary.) Thus, there is no doubt that the following films can be viewed as adaptations and compared to their source texts. The question, however, is, what relevance should we ascribe to the study of these films as adaptations – does being an adaptation add something to their interpretation? My suggestion is that considering these films not as historical-biographical dramas but as adaptations of non-fiction autobiographical writing does indeed change how these works, both the film *and* the source texts, are perceived by the public and by critics. Furthermore, these examples demonstrate how the reception of the source material is thus re-shaped in the cultural discourse.

Even though the same issues bother the biographical film as do adapted work, to view biographical film as adaptation without an identifiable source text poses certain challenges. W. Hesling believes that potential issues with depicting history and the individual affect the perception of the story – he sees the complexity of audiovisual codes (e.g. mise-en-scène, camera, montage, music and voice-over commentary) that visualize the abstract story, as something that makes "the historical film to give the past a face and a voice". (Hesling 2001, 193) In adaptations of autobiographical works, the "face and voice" of the actor rival that of the actual individual. If the "face and voice" of the individual on whose life story the film is based on are well-known to the audience, then the "faithfulness" to source material, in this case to the actual person, becomes critical (for example, how the actor manages to "act as" and looks like this person). These aspects have nothing to do with the actual story told on screen but become fundamental to the adaptation process. Belen Vidal calls this "the mise-en-scène of the historical character" (Vidal 2014, 11), emphasizing that:

> The biopic trades on a sense of authenticity that stems from the actor's body itself. Make-up and hair, costume, and especially voice and gesture need to meet a set of expectations shaped not only by an audience's knowledge and emotional response to the person portrayed but also, more often than not, by a history of previous representations — what could be called a collective social memory or even "icon" memory. (Ibid.)

When we watch a biographical film, the actor "becomes" not only a character on screen, but a representation of a real-life individual. The "face and voice" of an actor, "becoming" the portrayed person, both add to and detract from the "truth value" of the historical-biographical film. But what about a film where available information about the portrayed individual is somewhat limited? Here, the biographical film has an opportunity to truly shape our understanding of that individual. This is one reason why reviews of biographical films usually make a note of the success of the casting choice, not only the performance of the actor. This is an important factor, as actor's performance in biographical film is considered to have critical importance – even more so than historical-biographical facts.

Deborah Cartmell suggests that "we read adaptations for their generation of plurality of meanings" (Cartmell 1999, 28). A new approach on a familiar novel leads to an assessment of previous adaptations in comparison and contrast. In case of historical-biographical films, where the historical event and life story stand in the background of whatever identifiable source text the adaptation is "based on", the intertextual nature of adaptation adds much more than story to the film. Specifically regarding biographical films, Marta Minier points out that, as biographical films enter into the intertextual and intermedial discourse, "[m]ultiple sources and less direct influences are more likely to have informed a biopic or indeed a bio-docudrama than a single source, even if at times it is only a single source that is credited." (Minier and Pennacchia 2016, 9) I argue that much more than direct (or likely) source material plays a role here. Naturally, if the portrayed person is well-known, there are a multitude of images and stories about him or her, which all will influence how the audience reacts to the story. The viewer might regard the story or how it is presented with a critical eye but acknowledges that it is *a story* told. In film adaptation, expectations and current trends in a genre set limitations and methods to how the film is produced. Furthermore, it is important to consider why the film adaptation is created in the first place – there needs to be an already present or potential interest amongst the public, for a film producer to consider the investment.

When discussing biographical films based on non-literary sources (in her example, a photograph), Sara Brinch agrees that "[a]n adaptation of non-fiction sources must be studied as an intertextual and multi-referential universe". But she has also rather critically summarized the issues of adaptations of "real life and history", saying that "to be regarded as an adaptation, there has to be a main original that provides a story to be adapted, and that this original is somehow announcing or traceable by the discourses surrounding the film." (Brinch 2013, 292) Thus, in my view, although one might take an intertextual approach, viewing film adaptation as another guise of a story in cultural circulation, there needs to be a text or texts that are adapted, in order to talk about adaptation at all. Otherwise the film can claim to be "based on a true story", but not exactly an adaptation. In my opinion, this depends on the approach that filmmakers and viewers take.

Considering the above, the questions to ask when discussing following case studies are: how much is up to interpretation, how much do the (auto)biographical source texts and their film adaptations depend on context of their reception and interpretation, and does this dependence change over time? In my opinion that the following examples support, especially if the discourse surrounding the original text imposes itself on the film adaptation, the attempts by filmmakers to add their own interpretation help "re-affirm" the position of the source text and/or re-introduce the concerns that the original text raised.

2.2. Adapting (auto)biographies

As discussed, a historical or biographical film has a problematic semblance of a "true story" that influences how we understand and interpret it. In auto-biographical writing, the reader expects to find a "real person" behind the text. It is therefore often presumed that the author and narrator are identical and that the text must somehow reveal the author's "real image." In addition to the "life story" of an interesting individual that engages the readers, autobiographical writings can be approached for historical and/or biographical information. The impact of an autobiographical narrative lies in its first-person narration, and the autobiographical "I" of the text that promises, as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have phrased it, "intimacy and immediacy" (Smith and Watson 2008, 361). In an autobiographical story, thoughts and emotions, subjective opinions and descriptions of events and characters serve to bring the character of the author closer to the reader.

2.2.1. Memory, self and history

The criteria of an autobiography as a genre are complex to determine, as the characteristics attributed to it could also be used to describe many other literary genres. The obvious characteristic seems to be that an autobiography, whatever form it takes, is often (although not always) a first-person narration of a purposefully true story about the personal life of its author, a real-life individual. Numerous definitions of autobiographical writing exist, that all at minimal share the following characteristics: "Most fundamentally, autobiography is a self-produced, non-fiction text that tells the story of its writer's life" (Gunzenhauser 2001, 75). Notably, *how* this story is told is up to the author of the autobiography, thus many types of life narratives can be classified into the category of autobiographical writing.[27] According to Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "autobiography" should not be considered "a single genre, but an "umbrella" term for widely diverse kinds of life narrative […] that engage historically situated practices of self-representation" (Smith and Watson 2008, 357).

Setting aside the issues implied by "self-representation", it is important to note in the context of this thesis that autobiographies were for a long time

[27] *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms* (2001), for example, distinguishes four characteristics of autobiography while also making a clear distinction between different forms of autobiography, memoir (being public writings) and diary, journal (as private): *"*First, autobiography has a psychological and philosophical dimension that requires its writer to balance the deeds of an active public self with the thoughts of a contemplative private one. Second, autobiography requires its author to have an awareness of audience. […] Third, autobiography has clear formal conventions. […] Finally, autobiography is a literary form defined less by genre than by didactic intent.*"* (Gunzenhauser 2001, 75)

mostly appreciated for their *historical* value, for their ability to reflect on past lives and past times, and often treated as such – as historical, biographical source materials. The modernist movement developed an interest in aesthetics and psychology in autobiographical writings. However, the 1970 and 1980s witnessed a true rise of interest in life writing amongst literary scholars. William C. Spengemann in his *The Forms of Autobiography. Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre* (1980) describes the study of autobiographical writing as divided between the two camps of critics and scholars: those who view autobiographies as biographical writings ("historical rather than fictional materials") and "those who assert the right of autobiographies to present themselves in whatever form they may find appropriate and necessary" (Spengemann 1980, xii), meaning that the style and character of narration rises above the factuality.[28]

Compared to biographical writings, autobiographies balance on the (admittedly rather blurred) line between fiction and non-fiction, and enjoy a greater freedom in their use of "fictional" elements in storytelling. For example, in studies of life-writing Max Saunders has marked that the autobiographical narrative "nomadically crosses the borders between biography and fiction". (Saunders 2008, 328) Smith and Watson also argue that autobiographies imply a "greater use of fictional [narrative] strategies" than biography or history (Smith and Watson 2008, 356). In my view, however, especially considering the autobiographical texts represented in my case studies, a biography and history can also employ fictional strategies.

Because autobiographies were for a long time understood as *nonfiction*, they generally received little attention from literary scholars. In formulating a theoretical framework to describe the autobiography as a literary genre, barriers arise, to the accumulative effect that, as James Olney has said: "perception that there is no such creature as autobiography and there never has been – that there is no way to bring autobiography to heel as a literary genre with its own proper form, terminology, and observances." (Olney 1980, 4) These issues have long plagued autobiography. So much so, that in 1979, Paul de Man declared the death of autobiography as a genre. According to de Man, there is no point in viewing autobiographical writings as different from fictional literature – as all literature is in some way autobiographical and, as a genre, autobiographies are inherently unidentifiable (de Man 1979, 921–922).

Who is therefore the "I" in autobiographical writing? That which makes autobiography as a genre (with its expectations and rules) relevant to the critical concerns of this thesis is the question of *fidelity*: the historical-biographical "truths" in the autobiographical text, as well as the fidelity of an adaptation to both its source text and overall "true story". We may ask when adapting the

[28] Spengemann distinguishes further between the historical (a chronological narrative), philosophical (that stems from the romanticism) and poetic autobiography. The "poetic autobiographies" are considered "modern" autobiographies, wherein a coherent story, told in style dominates over the (historical) factual accuracy. (Spengemann 1980, xiv-xv).

first-person autobiographical narration into historical-biographical film, which is more critical to "stay true to" – the story, or how the story is told by the autobiographical "I" in the source text? Here, another issue with the autobiographical narration arises (exemplified by my third case-study). Namely, according to Paul John Eakin, "the self that is the center of all autobiographical narrative is necessarily a fictive structure" (Eakin 1985, 3), and "fictions and the fiction-making process are a central constituent of the truth of any life as it is lived and of any art devoted to the presentation of that life." (Eakin 1985, 5) Smith and Watson in their above-mentioned essay (as well as in other writings) emphasize that both the autobiographical narrative and the autobiographical "I" are "narrative constructs of identity", and the telling/writing of the self is subsequently a performative process, an "enactment" of the self (Smith and Watson 2008, 357). Indeed, as Roland Barthes famously expressed, to write an autobiography means to (re)create oneself on the pages of the book as a character. "It must all be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel" (Barthes 2010), he advises the readers on the title page of his autobiography *Roland Barthes* (first published in 1975). Therefore, if we can claim that the autobiographical "I" is a constructed character, how can one read autobiographical work as non-fiction?[29] Furthermore, how should this material be approached from the perspective of a biographer or a filmmaker?

In communication between the author, the autobiographical work and the readers, trust plays an important role. The author of an autobiography is assumed to be communicating their life story that emerges from reality (e.g. actual events that happened), and readers of the autobiography react to the story as such – under the assumption that the author is indeed telling the true story of his or her life. But as this story needs to be narrated in a structured form to be understandable, some selection and omission, "re-writing" of life, must take place. What the specific (allowed) limits of this "editing of life story" are, is again a matter of interpretation. However, the "I" in the autobiography, the person telling the story, is assumed to be "a real-life individual", telling their own story, and in this, expected to be "true to themselves".

In 1975, Phillippe Lejeune characterized this basic understanding as an agreement between the author of an autobiography and its reader – a communicational pact, wherein the reader assumes that the author, narrator and the protagonist are one and the same "for what defines autobiography for the one who is reading, is above all a contract of identity, sealed by the proper name." (Lejeune 1989, 19)[30] However, Lejeune also defines an autobiography as a

[29] Paul John Eakin concludes that "all autobiography has some fiction in it as it is to recognize that all fiction is in some sense necessarily autobiographical" (Eakin 1985, 10). Furthermore, as Smith and Watson also emphasize, this autobiographical "I" cannot be pinned down, since it "is neither unified nor stable; rather, it is split, fragmented, provisional, a sign with multiple referents" (Smith and Watson 2008, 357).

[30] The anonymous autobiography looks suspicious to the reader, as Lejeune points out, since "[f]or any reader, a text in the autobiographical style, which is claimed by no one, and a work of fiction are as much alike as two drops of water" (Lejeune 1989, 19).

"[r]etrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (Lejeune 1989, 4). According to this definition, the author of an autobiographical work undertakes a subjective self-analysis, by communicating not only the facts of his or her life, but also how they felt, what they thought, and how they interpreted the events they went through. Furthermore, the questions of memory remain at the core of autobiographical storytelling – who is the "I" of the past and the one writing the book, compared to the "I" on the pages of an autobiography – and can this contract of identity work? Importantly, when the reader deems something to be untrue in the autobiography, it does not necessarily mean that the author was intentionally misleading, omitting information or embellishing their story – rather, it can indicate that some loss of "truth" has occured due to limitations of human memory. [31]

If the narrator and the author are considered to be one and the same, the autobiographical character "I" should also be identified as the author. Seen from this perspective, there is an interesting combination of affinity and difference between Lejeune's view and that of Elizabeth Bruss, who suggest approaching the autobiography as an *act* rather than consider it through genre normative and the multiple forms it may take (as "there is no intrinsically autobiographical form") (Bruss 1976, 10). The "authobiographical act", as Bruss describes it, is similar to Lejeune's autobiographical pact in a way that author and reader act in agreement: that the author of the work and the narrator are viewed as one and the same, and the story must truthfully be told and understood as such by the reader as well. (Ibid.) In the context of my thesis, Bruss' suggestion that autobiographies should be considered in the social and cultural contexts of their creation and reception is important (Bruss 1976, 8).[32] The three examples of autobiographical source texts I discuss here need to be viewed from the point of their creation, specifically to scrutinize: why were they necessary for the author to write and how was this story received?

Reading an (auto)biographical text is perhaps the only way for the reader to experience another life – albeit even through imagination. It follows, that an

[31] Another dimension of the fiction-fact distinction in the autobiographical narrative concerns the "reliability" of the autobiographical "I" as a narrator, especially in the genre of autofiction, that appears to allow a "misuse" of the autobiographical pact that Lejeune refers to. Whereas "unreliability" of the narrator is often ascribed to fiction, this, as Per Krogh Hansen has pointed out, does not mean that unreliable narration can only be found in fiction and does not apply to factual narratives (Hansen 2017, 57).

[32] Bruss suggested in *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (1978) to consider autobiographies in the social and cultural context of their creation and reception, as these determine whether autobiographies are viewed as fiction or nonfiction: "Autobiography as we know it is dependent on distinctions between fiction and nonfiction, between rhetorical and empirical first-person narration. But these distinctions are cultural artifacts and might be differently drawn, as they indeed once were and might become again, leading to the obsolescence of autobiography or at least its radical reformation." (Bruss 1976, 8)

adaption of an autobiographical narrative onto screen in the form of a biographical film, offers greater possibilities as a source material for the "inner life" of the portrayed person. However, can this be true – considering the above-mentioned notion that the self of the person experiencing the events told in the autobiographical narrative, the narrator that tells the story and the author cannot be one and the same? Is a film adaptation that is based on autobiographical material "truer" to the "true life story" (the feelings, opinions and experiences of the biographical individual) than a film based on solely biographical material? After all, the story told in an autobiographical book is a subjective creation based on past experiences.

So how can or should we discuss autobiographical writing – as literature or as historical documents? Autobiographical sources have most obviously been *the* material to focus on for biographers, but also for historians, especially when considering autobiographical writings by prominent historical figures. However, due to the fiction-fact questions associated with autobiography as a historical source, it falls somewhere in the grey area of in-between.

Although historians have considered autobiographical narratives as historical source material for a long time, according to Joan Tumblety, it was the memory studies from 1980s that led to the understanding amongst historians that not only autobiographical writings, but all "their primary sources were rhetorical constructs rather than transparent windows onto the past worlds." (Tumblety 2013, 1; 3) Tumblety points out that autobiographies and all life writing have become more common material for historians and cultural studies alike, even though a clear framework for theoretical approaches is still lacking. (Ibid., 2)

The contract, or pact, between the author and the reader is a relevant issue also when dealing with reading autobiographies as "representations of history". The reader may perceive the autobiographical writing as a subjective and imaginative take on the past that is nevertheless inherently truthful or based on a "true story". Thus, these writings, and the textual contract that takes place in the author-reader relationship, shape our historical understanding to a great deal. In addition, through author's memories, and the subjectivity of an "I" and "the eye" in the autobiographical narrative, an individual person and their unique perspective appear through text. Through the autobiographical character (who admittedly, as discussed above, can be viewed not as a "real-life" author, but rather as a textual construct), we nevertheless learn in an "intimate and immediate" manner (as Smith and Watson worded it above) about his or her past and the events that occurred. In this, history through autobiographical writings is perhaps the most direct and personal way to access the past. This has been summarized as the different ways the reader can and will identify with the protagonist of the story: "Generally, the reader of a biography can be compared to a person examining a portrait or viewing a performer on stage. The sympathetic reader of autobiography is summoned through empathy and may remember moments more vividly than simply facts." (Gunzenhauser 2001, 78)

In the process of film adaptation, the personal engagement with the autobiographical writing changes for the mode of engagement with the audiovisual

narrative. The difficulties that arise, are obvious, to the extent that some have considered an autobiographical narrative "resistant" to this adaptation process:

> […] the written memoir, because of its peculiar dependence on the interrelation of author and protagonist by way of the first-person narration, inherently resists adaptation into film by someone other than its author. […] eliminating the "auto" from the autobiography typically transforms the written memoir into a flat reenactment of past events, "based on a true story", yet presented from an entirely different perspective, to be viewed and evaluated as a completely different kind of work. (Mooney 2007, 294)

Mooney refers here not only to the natural "fictionalization" process of any (film) adaptation, he also points out the loss of an "auto", or the autobiographical self. One can understand from this quote that whatever the "story" is that is adapted onto screen, the only "true" perspective can be that of an autobiographical author, and therefore, an examination of the connections between the source and adaptation may be considered without merit. However, if the "I" of the autobiographical writing, for example, a memoir, is a construct of memory and imagination, of omission and additions; film adaptations then face a question of – what are the differences in adapting a non-fictional "I" narrative versus a fictional book narrated in the first person? And how to discuss these films as adaptations? Susan S. Lanser has illustrated the differences between the "true" and "fictional" autobiographies, claiming that, based solely on textual signs, it is not possible to make any decisions about the ontological status of the text. (Lanser 2008, 206). She further concludes that "[…] our reading of textual voice does not simply follow the rules of discourse; it adheres to another logic that is not only formal and structural but pragmatic and contextual, 'staining' the divide between fiction and the real." (Lanser 2008, 217) This invites us to consider autobiographies in terms similar to any other literary texts, rendering the fiction-fact debate irrelevant. The film adaptations of autobiographical sources could further be interpreted without textual comparisons between the source and the adaptation, without the dreaded "fidelity debate". Still, when an autobiographical work is a source for film adaptation, these questions constantly emerge in reviews and discussions. On the one hand, a film adaptation of an autobiographical book (that furthermore has some historical and cultural significance) is not "just a story retold". The technicalities of the adaptation process, especially when considering adapting the first-person narration onto a screen story, are the same for both fictional and non-fictional texts. The techniques that film adaptations use to render the first-person point-of-view of the autobiographical source are interesting to study as techniques in their own right. A discussion of reasons and functions of the transfer of the point-of-view of the autobiographical narrator into film adaptation can be combined with an assessment of the cultural-historical aspects of the adaptation process.

2.2.2. Adapting first-person autobiographical narration into film

While many theories of film adaptation stem from literary studies, so do many studies of adaptation and film narration. This connection is unsurprising, as the parallels between film and literature reach back to the beginning of film history, where the intertitles are perhaps among the best examples of "literature on screen", especially in terms of adapted texts. These connections aside, it is clear that, as Jakob Lothe has emphasized, the "film narrator is very different from the literary narrator" (Lothe 2000, 27). How the spectator understands film narration, perceives the events depicted in a film story, is a complex matter. The figure of the *narrator* in film is not always clearly definable – who tells the story in film? And if that storyteller is identified, how does the storyteller of the literary source text transfer into film through the adaptation process? For Seymour Chatman, the cinematic narrator is a complex medium that communicates and transfers the film's "message" to the viewers through multiple communicative devices, such as different types of sound on the auditory channel or editing and cinematography on the visual channel. As Jakob Lothe (2000, 30) notes, "[m]uch of the challenge to the film author lies in presenting the various elements that together form the film narrator in such a way that the viewer experiences all of them as necessary and thematically productive". The film viewer constructs a coherent film narration from the multiple components that comprise the narrator's communication (Ibid.).[33]

The most obvious narrator in film is the "all-seeing eye", or as Brian McFarlane describes it, the camera: "[…] becomes the narrator by, for instance, focusing on such aspects of mis-en-scene as the way actors look, move, gesture, or are costumed […] in these ways the camera may catch a 'truth' which comments on and qualifies what the characters actually say." (McFarlane 1996, 17) Edward Braningan finds that the film camera acts on multiple levels and fills numerous functions, individually and concurrently: "[…] a camera is (usually) enmeshed in character, place, atmosphere, action, reaction, events, connections among events, causality, enigmas, rhetoric, theme, narrative and narration, though not necessarily all of these to the same degree in a particular

[33] Whereas Chatman sees the clear presence of a cinematic narrator, as an organizing and transmitting force in film (that mostly "shows", but sometimes also "tells") (Chatman 1990, 127), this view is radically different from David Bordwell's concept of film narration, that is narration without a narrator (Bordwell 1985, 61–62). Bordwell also questions the purpose and use of considering the "narrator concept" in film. (Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema* 2012, 129): "Everyone agrees that films sometimes have narrators." Bordwell classifies these to be either "character narrators" or "noncharacter narrators", who "are given voice (either soundtrack or through intertitles) and sometimes a body, as in character narrators in the story world […] The crucial claim is whether these more or less tangible narrators, along with everything else in the film, proceed from a more encompassing narrator who 'tells the film'". (Bordwell 2012, 121) Bordwell therefore finds that equivalent of the literary narrator in film is "an unnecessary and misleading personification of the narrative dynamics of a film" (Bordwell 2012, 122).

film." (Branigan 2006, 9) The film camera can tell a story or represent a point-of-view in that story, but, according to Edward Branigan, the camera "pointing" at something does not automatically constitute "a point of view" (Ibid.). Thus, in addition to the camera, all else in film also works towards telling the story, especially the off-screen additions like music and voice-over narration.

The "subjective camera" has sometimes been identified as the "point-of-view (POV)" shot, but the subjectivity and point of view have different meanings. Point of view or perspective can refer to a perception (seeing, viewing) or to a perspective as understanding, belief or emotion. POV also influences the viewer's understanding of a story. Edward Branigan highlights other aspects of "point-of-view" in film, noting the question of "authority", as the camera has the power in narration ("when does a camera appear to be omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and/or omni-temporal?") (Branigan 2006, 40). Branigan takes this question further: if the camera represents a point of view as perception, and if through camera work the film narrative includes the point-of-view as perspective, to whom does this perspective belong? Is it, he asks, "the author, implied author, tacit narrator, explicit narrator, invisible observer, character, ideal spectator, or actual spectator"? (Ibid.) I find these questions helpful when studying how the first-person autobiographical narration has reached film text, since the process of how the filmmakers have selected to "transfer" the subjective point-of-view of the autobiographical narration can take several forms, both straightforward and complex. And although the use of a voice-over narration and so-called "subjective camera" (POV shot) seem at first glance as very straightforward "tools" to render the narrator's subjectivity, their use involves some issues that I will further illustrate in my case studies.

When the adapted source text has a recognizable narration or style, it is often transferred to film through the voice of the off-screen narrator. In the case of adaptations of literary texts, the voice-over narration is often used (especially in the case of first-person narration) in the beginning and sometimes also in conclusion of the film story. Still, in fiction film studies, voice-over as part of film narration has either been overlooked, criticized for being a "non-filmic" or a "literary" tool, or considered "an easy way out" to describe what cannot (or should not) be shown on screen. Sarah Kozloff who is among the most prominent scholars researching voice-over narration, especially in Hollywood fiction films, has summarized this stance as follows:

> Prejudice against voice-over for "telling" crops up over and over in remarks about narration "restricting" or "interrupting" the image track. It is easy to point to some didactic oral pronouncement, less easy to show how the editing, camera angles, or content selection have manipulated the viewer. The technique itself has become a scapegoat – often letting filmmakers who have employed it to convey offensive material off the hook. (Kozloff 1988, 16)

Adaptations of autobiographical writings do make use of voice-over narration, but this can by no means be considered an excessively used technique. Still, many film adaptations (including *A Woman in Berlin* that I discuss in chapter 3.2) make use of the source material by quoting from it directly or, in somewhat abbreviated manner, include prominent parts of the source text through voice-over narration. However, films that do not rely on any other source material than the original script also use voice-over narration.[34]

Whereas the use of the voice-over technique in adaptation often refers back to the subjective first-person narration of the source text, as we literally hear the character-as-a-narrator; the use of camera techniques can also successfully give an impression of the "first-person narration" in film. However, some critics have disapproved of this illusion of "participating" in the introspection or experiencing of the subjectivity of a film character. For example, Julian Murphet in his discussion of the point of view in film in *Narrative and Media* (2005), points out the irony of using voice-over and POV shots to ensure the viewer identifies with characters:

> […] POV shots, and their combination with voice-over narration might be thought to effect a pretty comprehensive focalisation of the narrative. But the irony is that identification does not work so happily with a consistency of literal camera POV. For some strange psychological reason, it is the case that the unrelenting optical point of view of a character alienates us as often as it draws us in: the simple fact is that a machine lens and an organic lens are two very different phenomena, and any time a mechanical lens is pretending to "have a body", it can easily seem ridiculous. […] (Murphet 2005, 92)

"Most cinema", he concludes, "claims us not through the cold mechanical eye of the camera but through the sensitive faces of others registered in its visual field" (Murphet 2005, 95). This is an important notion, considering, that the most obviously recognizable way to transfer the subjective point-of-view of the autobiographical "I" to the film text is through POV shots (first-person shots or "subjective camera"). (I will return to this dilemma that Murphet refers to later on, when discussing the use of voice-over narration accentuated by POV shots in *A Woman in Berlin*).

Generally speaking, using the POV shot creates an illusion for the film viewer that they literally see what the character sees: if in one shot we see the character, especially if the shot is a close-up, it is logical to assume that what

[34] For such a common tool, it is surprising that filmmakers and film critics tend to criticize it. Kozloff also points out that, disregarding the use of voice-over in film as a literary technique does not mean that, as a technique, it does not hold its valid place in film narration: "[I]f voice-over is categorized as a literary technique, then by implication it is inappropriate in a pure film. […] Even if voice-over were a literary device, it would be no less valuable, no less valid a technique than any other that film has retailored to serve its own purposes." (Kozloff 1988, 17)

follows is meant to be experienced as if viewed through the character's "eyes".[35]

POV shots can either aim to be emotionally engaging (for example, if combined with reactions of the characters in a reaction shot and similar elements), or they can be used with the purpose to be informative – to set the scene and background, or as a bridge (from one scene to another, or from one character's perspective to another, or to the camera narration in third person). There are, of course, complex forms of the POV shot that represent the subjective perspective of a character that include many other attributes besides the direct POV shot technique. The POV shot facilitates the viewer identification with film characters, however for this to be successful, more than "seeing through the eyes" of a person on screen is required. The viewer needs to also relate to the thoughts and emotions of characters, and here the POV shot and voice-over narration form only one part of the whole.

In the following case studies, I explore how, in the process of adaptation, the first-person narration of an autobiographical "I" is rendered or modified in the film text. I find this a relevant and interesting question that can be addressed well by a comparative textual analysis. In my approach, I focus on key scenes from the written source materials and how these (if indeed) have been transferred into the film narrative. I will examine the use of POV shots, flashbacks, camera movement, and other relevant elements. I will also include some mise-en-scène analysis of selected scenes of case studies, in order to highlight and assess the performance of the actor playing the biographical character, as relevant to film adaptation. What effect (or purpose) can the attempt to transfer/translate/transpose the "first-person narration" of an autobiographical source material into film adaptation have? Here, the interpretation (and possible misinterpretations, when regarded from the perspective of "fidelity") of source material carry crucial weight in creating our insight into the biographical individual.

[35] There are a few examples of film adaptations that almost solely tell the story using the POV shot narration technique. One notable recent example is Julian Schnabel's film adaptation (2007) of Jean-Dominique Bauby's 1997 memoir, *Diving Bell and the Butterfly*. This film uses extreme POV shots extensively to convince the viewer that we are seeing the events as-if through the still functioning eye of a paralyzed character (suffering from Locked-In Syndrome) (Heidt 2009).

3. DISCUSSING FILM ADAPTATIONS OF (AUTO)BIOGRAPHIES

In chapter 2.1 of this thesis I referred to perspectives on how historical and biographical films can be discussed as adaptations. Hutcheon has also stated that studies of reception of adaptations must consider whether viewers are "experiencing adaptations *as adaptations*" (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013, 114). Based on this observation, Sara Brinch raises the following question relevant to my discussion: "What happens to our understanding of the historical fiction film when regarded as adaptation?" (Brinch 2013, 237) Does it indeed change something in our understanding about the film, if it is "not only" a movie "based on a true story", but the story can also be located in a source text that is known? I argue that it does, as it is an inevitable dialogical process. Even if the viewer is not familiar with the source, a film adaptation can successfully create interest and pave the way to the original story. But in the case of historical-biographical films, the fact that they are based on previously culturally processed materials, also adds significant credibility to them.

When adapting any genre of literature narrated in the first person into film, the problem of representing the "I" of the narrator of the source text arises. As the camera tells the story, different techniques determine how the adaption of the first-person narration – especially the subjective and internal monologue – into film text works. Lacking the inner perspective of the narrating "I" from the literary text, film can focus on bodily and facial reactions of the character, or instead of showing, tell the story through dialogue or monologue. First-person narration in film can be rendered by subjective camera work. Film can also introduce voice-over narration – a technique that is common, but criticized as "too much of a literary attribute" (but as with intertitles in silent film, the voice-over narration can add a valuable dimension to the story.)

Whatever the genre characterizations, film as an easily accessible portrayal of the past most certainly has a lot to offer in shaping the perception of the audience. The film narrative, by combining facts and vision of the filmmaker, with the added input from imagination of the viewers, creates a fictional world. This fictionality of (all) film may be criticized for being a "distortion of the past" (Rosenstone 1995A[36]), but that which at the same time makes the past accessible and facilitates a discussion of topics and issues that otherwise might not have reached common consciousness.

I have chosen *The Pianist* as an example for illustrating issues of a genre and "rules of representation", specifically, how the representation of the Holocaust

[36] Rosenstone has called historians out for their "mistrust" of historical films that are presumably historically inaccurate and "distort", "trivialize" or "romanticize" people and events. But covertly, Rosenstone finds, the historians distrust historical films due to the popularity of the film itself in an "increasingly postliterate world (in which people can read but won't)." (Rosenstone 1995A, 46)

in fiction film influences the creation and reception of any film that deals with this subject matter. It also exemplifies how the adaptation of a memoir of a Holocaust survivor adds further responsibility to the filmmaker to "stay true" to the source text to ensure historical and biographical veracity and authenticity, while also creating a film that contributes to popular culture, as entertainment. Therefore, in chapter 3.1, I discuss this film not only as an adaptation of W. Szpilman's memoir, but in connection and in the context of the Holocaust film in popular culture.

A Woman in Berlin is a case of "missing identity", here the identity of the author of the anonymously published source text was made public knowledge (against the wishes of the author), and the resulting critical discussion paved the way to success for this film adaptation. Even more, this is a case of giving a face and a voice to a previously relatively unknown individual. How this context influences our understanding of the story, is something that I will explore in chapter 3.2.

The third case study, that of the film *Hamsun* and its (auto)biographical source material I discuss in chapter 3.3, is a fascinating example of how "tracing the originals" leads back to, one might say, a surprising discovery of an autobiographical "voice" that is definitely present in the biographical film.

3.1. An adaptation of a Holocaust memoir: *The Pianist*

Directed by Roman Polanski (screenwriter Ronald Harwood, with Adrian Brody in the role of the protagonist), *The Pianist* (2002) is a historical drama film based on the memoir by Władysław Szpilman (1911–2000), a Jewish performer from Warsaw and a Holocaust survivor. The renowned musician Szpilman published his memoir in Polish in 1946 under the title *Śmierć Miasta. Panietniki Władysława Szpilmana 1939–1945.*[37] Despite popularity, Szpilman's book was not re-published in Poland under the Soviet regime. The memoir was published in German in 1998 under the title *Das wunderbare Überleben. Warschauer Erinnerungen 1939–1945*, then translated into English under the title *The Pianist: The Extraordinary True Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939–1945* (first published in Great Britain in 1999).[38]

As the title of Szpilman's book indicates, his memoir spans the years from start to the end of the Second World War. Soon after Warsaw was occupied by the Nazi Germany, Szpilman and his family were segregated and forced to live in the Warsaw Ghetto together with around 400,000 other Jews. The book

[37] Trans. *Death of a City. Memories of Władysław Szpilman 1939–1945.*

[38] As there are several different editions, with varying extra materials in addition to Szpilman's own text, I specify that the following discussion is based on and quotes are taken from the Kindle edition of the book: Szpilman, Wladyslaw. *The Pianist. The Extraordinary Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939-45. With Extracts from the Diary of Wilm Hosenfeld.* Orion. Kindle Edition. First published in ebook in 2011 by Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

focuses on the suffering of the Szpilman family and others, named and anonymous Jewish characters. It is an account of suffering of the whole city of Warsaw – although it concentrates on the life in the Ghetto – the fate of the whole city and its inhabitants, including mentions of the Polish resistance movement, is recorded in Szpilman's book. Szpilman, as he tells himself, miraculously survived the Ghetto horrors and avoided deportation to the Treblinka extermination camp. Much space in his memoir is dedicated to the time he was hiding from the Nazis after a successful escape from the Ghetto with help from his Polish friends. Although Szpilman describes the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943 and the Warsaw Uprising organized by the Polish resistance in 1944, by the time these events happened, Szpilman was already living in isolation from the outside world where he remained until the war ended. *Śmierć Miasta* is thus a personal memoir of a Holocaust survivor, written and published in the aftermath of the war. The book reads both as a memoir and a witness statement. It presents an account of war-time events as Szpilman perceived them (including second-hand accounts of events he himself did not witness). Interestingly, Szpilman presents his most vivid personal memories in a very restrained style of narration, often matter-of-fact, especially when he describes the horrors and brutality of crimes committed in the Ghetto. Yet, great fragility of emotion is also perceptible, especially when he combines his thoughts and feelings as he recalls them from the time of the events with how he regards them in retrospect. Szpilman stresses on several occasions that he finds narrating his experiences difficult and that, when looking back, he is not always certain about the meaning and reliability of some incidents and memories that he has of these. In fact, Szpilman acknowledged that it was hard for him to create a coherent story about his experiences:

> Today, as I look back on other, more terrible memories, my experiences of the Warsaw ghetto, a period of almost 2 years, merge into a single image as if they had lasted only a single day. Hard as I try, I cannot break it up into smaller sections that would impose some chronological order on it, as you usually do when writing a journal. (Szpilman 2011, 61)[39]

The citation reveals a traumatic effect of time compression and difficulties in maintaining the temporal order as a basis of a coherent autobiographical narrative. Narrating was difficult for Szpilman which is not surprising as the experiences he went through were that traumatic.[40]

[39] Hereafter I refer to W. Szpilman's memoir in an ebook edition (2011) as "Szpilman" [page number as appointed in Kindle edition].

[40] According to Cathy Caruth (1996), this lack of model of an experience or a reference point well characterizes the impact of traumas on individuals, as they were experienced in the 20th century. Caruth has argued that, "through the notion of trauma […] we can understand that rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting *history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not." (Caruth 1996, 11)

Memoirs, witness statements, testimonies and interviews collected as part of court proceedings and research studies form the most prominent mode of narration of the Holocaust events. This does not mean that various other means to convey or express the Holocaust trauma are not equally present or influential in contemporary culture. Representation of the Holocaust trauma in fictional genres such as novels or fiction films, however, has provoked controversy. Regarding the autobiographical non-fictional genres, the questions around facts versus fiction, memories versus various other representations of events are equally often debated, as "*[e]very canonical work of Holocaust literature involves some graying of the line between fiction and reality*" (Franklin 2011, 11) [original italics].[41] Autobiographical works face the same issues.

What we know of the Holocaust today, owes much to narratives such as Szpilman's. Memories and eyewitness accounts (either collected immediately post war or those recorded decades later) are significant when it comes to remembering, or not forgetting, the Holocaust.[42] The testimonies, witness statements, diaries, memoirs and other autobiographical narratives about the Holocaust are individual and personal. Concurrently, these documents contribute to the knowledge of the Holocaust that form part of our cultural memory. The sharing of the stories of countless victims means that their faces and voices are not forgotten, and the impact of their narratives has a greater historical reach.

The "cultural turn" of the 1970s brought with it what has been called a "memory boom", with much general fascination with what is remembered, how this is passed on, and how it finds its place in collective memory. The prominence and significance of memory in studying history has its roots in the Second World War and most critically in the Holocaust testimonies. Using the terminology of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (*La Mémoire collective*, 1950), we talk about "social" memory, meaning that memories are not only personal, but as they are passed down through generations they become part of a "collective" memory. In addition, scholars who consider the roles of media and culture in public discourse and in collective memories, refer to "cultural"[43] memories that range from what can be found in museums and other institutional memory sites, to written and mediated memory (be it fictional or non-fictional).

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[41] See examples at the web page of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/holocaust-fiction. Some of these works redefine or reverse the genre expectations. For example, Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus*. (*Maus I. A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986. *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1991).

[42] On this, see "Narrative, Testimony, Fiction. The Challenge of Not Forgetting the Holocaust", by Jakob Lothe (2016). See also the introductory chapter in Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman, and James Phelan (eds). *After Testimony: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Holocaust Narrative for the Future* (2012) (Lothe, Suleiman and Phelan 2012).

[43] See on this: Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 2008: *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. (Erll and Nünning 2008)

Relevantly, critics have expressed some concerns regarding the potential authenticity of memories brought into focus by the "memory boom". For example, Silke Arnold-de Simine uses the term "inauthentic fakes" to refer to "false, mistaken or implanted memories, prosthetic, second-hand, mediated or virtual memories, trivial or nostalgic memories, or simply memory scenarios whose veracity or relationship to the real is dubious" (Simine 2013, 14). The role these memories have in creating our understanding of the past, and how traces of traumas of the past are in fact transferred to the collective memory of next generations, are important to note. The horrors of the Holocaust form part of our past, but as such, they are increasingly becoming vague as fewer people who have direct recollections of these events remain living amongst us.[44]

Consequently, the one pressing problem with depicting the Holocaust has always been *how* to do it so that it finds its place in historical understanding and remains relevant (as a warning) for future generations. With the decreasing number of people who have direct experiences with the Holocaust, the event becomes a retelling or re-memory. Concerning this, Jakob Lothe has noted the importance that both literature and film have, which is through "aesthetically created empathy" to "improve readers' and viewers' understanding of the Holocaust". (Lothe 2016, 160)

Many Holocaust and war survivors remain(ed) silent about their experiences instead of sharing them. Szpilman's son Andrzej Szpilman has said that writing this memoir enabled his father to work through his wartime experiences, and "free his mind and emotions to continue with his life" (A. Szpilman 2011, 8).[45] Trauma narrative is a technique used by psychologists to help survivors of traumatic experiences articulate their memories and, in this way, to re-process them. However, it would be too simplistic to say that narrating his trauma helped W. Szpilman process the horrors of the Holocaust. Andrzej Szpilman writes in the foreword to the English publication of the memoirs that his father *never spoke* of his wartime experiences. We lack the first hand account for reasons why Szpilman selected not to discuss these traumatic experiences with his family – perhaps because he had already made them public knowledge in his

[44] A recent US study of public knowledge on understanding of the Holocaust that was commissioned by Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany and conducted by Schoen Consulting showed both that the Holocaust as a genocide is still very much in the public memory in 2018, but that the public lacks factual knowledge about it (Schoen Consulting 2018). The *New York Times* picked up the results of this study and published an article with a rather telling heading: "Holocaust is fading from minds, survey finds" (Astor 2018). What this example illustrates, in my opinion, is not how the Holocaust as a historical event is misrepresented or forgotten by the general public, but that the public still seeks knowledge about it, as the critical tone of Astor's article demonstrates, a lack of knowledge is criticized as well.

[45] Andrzej Szpilman also noted: "My father wrote the first version of this book in 1945, I suspect for himself rather than humanity in general. It enabled him to work through his shattering wartime experiences and free his mind and emotions to continue with his life." (A. Szpilman, 2011, 8)

book? However, this unspoken past captured in his father's written memoir, as Andrzej Szpilman writes, has influenced his own self-identification:

> Until a few years ago my father never spoke of his wartime experiences. Yet they had been my companions since childhood. Through this book, which I surreptitiously took from a corner of our bookshelves when I was twelve years old, I discovered why I had no paternal grandparents and why my father never talked about his family. The book revealed a part of my own identity to me. I knew he knew I had read it, but we never discussed it, and perhaps for that reason it never struck me that the book could be of any significance to other people – something pointed out by my friend Wolf Biermann when I told him my father's story. (A. Szpilman, 2011, 7)

Here, Andrzej Szpilman explains how events he himself had never experienced, had impacted on his understanding of himself, his family and his identity. [46] This understanding of the trauma his father had lived through, enabled Andrzej to fathom how his father's recollections contributed to the collective cultural memory.

One can assume that as an author, W. Szpilman chose to communicate his experiences to the wider audience, with the likely purpose of sharing the experiences of his "miraculous survival", but also to share his perspectives on the destruction of Warsaw and its Jewish population. Therefore his memoir can be read both as a historical and a personal account, one source that has added value to the overall understanding of the Holocaust as an historical event in the public memory.

Information about our past is under public eye when communicated through history books and educational materials, captured in museums, memorials and other means, and as such Holocaust has become part of the "consumer culture". In an introduction to a recent collection of essays, *Holocaust Cinema in the 21st Century. Memory, Images, and the Ethics of Representation* (2015), editors Oleksandr Kobrynskyy and Gerd Bayer rightfully emphasize that the "dissemination of Holocaust memory is mainly taking place outside the realm of academia." (Kobrynskyy and Bayer 2015, 1) Media, especially film, plays a crucial role in this process, and here Kobrynskyy and Bayer refer to Joshua Hirsch's "theory of cinema as both a transmitter of historical trauma and a form of posttraumatic historical memory." (Hirsch 2004, 3)

[46] Scholars talk about "postmemory" in relation to the experiences of second and third generations after the Second World War, those whose families were directly impacted by the war, when discussing how the traces and traumas of the past were transferred to the next generations. Marianne Hirsch describes postmemory as: "[…] the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory's connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation." (Hirsch 2008, 107)

Depicting events of the Holocaust in fiction films and documentaries will always posit ethical dilemmas around memory, trauma and narrating trauma; these are the limitations of information and understanding of the past associated with the passage of time. Much discussion around the perception of the Holocaust in film relates to questions of authenticity and ethical challenges of representation. Narrating the Holocaust especially in (fiction) film always seems to face the problem of "imagining the unimaginable" (Wiesel 2003, xi). As both an adaptation and a historical-biographical film, *The Pianist* certainly encounters these challenges – as I will also discuss in section 3.1.3 with a particular focus on the film's reception.

3.1.1. "Being a witness": the memoir and film adaptation

The Pianist begins with a scene of what appears to be a documentary footage of Warsaw in 1939 (the year and location are presented on screen). Depicted here are everyday images from city life, where people go on about their lives on streets and in parks. These scenes are accompanied by piano music. The historical footage of Warsaw cuts to a close-up of a pair of hands, playing the same piece on the piano that we hear in the opening sequence as offscreen sound. The camera moves slowly from the hands of the pianist to his face. The interior of the room shows the place to be a studio of some kind. The camera movement is steady, the lighting muted, everything we see conveys order and tranquility. Both the well-dressed pianist, as well as the other character in this scene – a man visible through the glass screen in the next room who follows the sheet music – fully concentrate on music and the performance. When the first faint sounds of explosions cut through the music, the pianist and the man in the control room exchange startled glances. Still, they continue with their activities, despite the distractions. Suddenly, the windows of the control room shatter, the plaster falls from the ceiling, which momentarily shocks them both. The pianist continues to play even when a third man rushes into the control room and makes frantic signs to "cut" the performance. The assistant follows, inviting the musician to stop and come with them. Instead, the pianist mutely shakes his head and keeps playing even as the others rush out at the sounds of explosions. The pianist goes on playing until being hit by a blast of glass and debris from yet another explosion, and he falls to the floor. [*The Pianist*, 0:00:02-0:02:17][47]

This is a very poignant opening scene that depicts a sense of peace and, above all, cultural enlightenment, destroyed by the war. The scene foreshadows the fate of the character as an artist and a musician, for whom music becomes both the reason he has survived and the reason to live. (I will return to this characterization in section 3.1.2.)

We follow the actor playing the pianist (Adrien Brody) leaving the studio, we see people screaming and running around covering their heads for protection

[47] Hereafter I am referring to *The Pianist* DVD copy from 2009 (Prior, Vilnius).

from the falling plaster and glass, to the sounds of air sirens. From amongst the people running, a young blond woman stops on the stairs as she sees the pianist running towards her. She introduces herself as Dorota and tells "Mr. Szpilman" that she loves his playing, but then exclaims in disbelief: "You're bleeding!" [*The Pianist*, 0:02:12-0:02:17]. The scene reveals a sharp contrast between war and violence on one hand and the civilized and every-day on the other, as Szpilman answers with a polite and flirtatious smile: "It's nothing," and turns to Dorota's brother to say: "Where you've been hiding her?" [Ibid.] In this scene, the bombardment of the city of Warsaw is deliberately understated. The absence of effects that would identify this as a war film accentuate not war action, but its consequences. We observe the people on the streets of Warsaw in the documentary footage and then these three young people who have had no previous experience with the violence of war, and who obviously cannot comprehend it. These types of contrasts, the reactions of incomprehension and disbelief, even in the face of true horrors and direct personal violence, recur throughout the movie.

W. Szpilman's memoir begins with closing of the Ghetto. The narrative follows events leading up to this and foreshadows what author knows will happen in the future. The style of narration in this memoir is often fragmented. A quick sketch of a scene or a conversation is intercepted by narration with references that aim to provide an overall historical perspective or personal views on events. The author often reaches for metaphors to somehow communicate the oppressive aura of this horrible existence. For example, Szpilman writes about the life in the Ghetto:

> I can think of only one comparison that would give an idea of our life in those terrible days and hours: it was like an anthill under threat. When some thoughtless idiot's brutal foot begins to destroy the insects' home with its hobnailed heel, the ants will scurry hither and thither, searching more and more busily for some way out, a way to save themselves, but whether because they are paralysed by the suddenness of the attack, or in concern for the fate of their offspring and whatever else they can save, they turn back as if under some baleful influence instead of going straight ahead and out of range, always returning to the same pathways and the same places, unable to break out of the deadly circle – and so they perish. Just like us. (Szpilman, 90–91)

By comparing the people trapped within the Ghetto walls with ants who are under constant threat of annihilation, this quote from Szpilman summarizes his views of horrors that surround him. While the memoir's narrative places the reader directly in the middle of life in the Ghetto, in the film adaptation, the feeling of waiting for a "foot to stomp down" is rendered indirectly, gained through images of suppression and deterioration that eventually gain prominence, as the Jews are forced into the Ghetto and everyday life becomes more desperate and miserable. As the time passes, the imagery becomes increasingly

somber, dark colors dominate, and the buildings and people gain a permanent hue of greyness.

While the memoir renders a sense of despair from page one of the book, in the film family and friends try first to adapt to the situation and daily life goes on despite discriminations against Jews. Slowly however, an overwhelming sense of foreboding builds up and eventually engulfs the Szpilman family and the viewer. In the film the turning point comes when Szpilmans must sell their furniture and Wladek's precious piano to move to the Ghetto. It is made very clear then that the Jews have no choice but to follow the orders to move. The date, 31st of October 1940, is shown on screen again, as the Szpilman family joins a stream of people walking along the streets of Warsaw towards the Ghetto. Here, Szpilman meets Dorota once again. Dorota tells him that she was reluctant to come watch this "disgrace," but could not stay away. She exclaims to Wladek: "It's too absurd!" [*The Pianist*, 0:15:25]

The effect of a psychological shock experienced as the horrors he witnesses keep piling up, manifests in Szpilman's own narrative. Film adaptation enhances this effect by adding one schocking scene after another, where at times camera focuses on violence for a brief moment, in other instances the narrative supports a sense of dread by inferences that violence will be inevitable. What actually will happen is unknown and unexpected. Here, the viewer is placed in the same situation as the characters on screen: as the violence makes absolutely no sense to the characters, they can find no reason for it, and thus the impact of the fatalities and horrors that the Holocaust inflicted on its victims, is communicated.

Two examples from the film text illustrate this well. Firstly, the "dance scene" in which German officers force Jews waiting to be allowed through the Ghetto gates to "dance" for their amusement, laughing and insulting them; which illustrates how mindlessly cruel, random and dehumanizing what Wladek sees around him is [*The Pianist*, 0:19:00–0:20:05]. In the second scene, the Szpilman family watches from their flat across the street how an old man in a wheelchair is thrown out of a window into his death seemingly for the sole reason that he could not stand up when German officers ordered him to during a raid [*The Pianist*, 0:29:35–0:30:00]. This is followed by a "shooting practice" where the German soldiers gather men from the same building, bring them outside and order them to run, while they randomly shoot them to death. The scene is horrific in its randomness: finished with killing, the officers simply drive away. Here the film adaptation adds a small but significant detail that somehow manages to increase the already overwhelming inhumanity of the actions: the officers drive over a wounded man (not dead bodies as Szpilman himself describes in his memoir[48]): The man, seeing the approaching car, cries out in a desperate plea, but the car drives forward in a straight line. The viewer might ask – would that man have survived if he fell to the side of the street instead?

[48] "The SS men all got into the car and drove away over the dead bodies. The vehicle swayed slightly as it passed over them, as if it were bumping over shallow potholes." (Szpilman, 79)

Scenes like these soon become a daily occurrence, as Szpilman describes in his book (see pp. 78–80): "That night about a hundred people were shot in the ghetto, but this operation did not make nearly as much of an impression as the first. The shops and cafés were open as usual next day" (Szpilman, 81).

This sense of irrationality regarding what is happening – the lack of belief that it *could* actually happen, and more so, that it could happen to *them*, characterizes reactions of both the Szpilmans and their friends. Szpilman describes several times throughout the book how he and others followed the news of the war, always hoping for some change, believing their situation to be only temporary. As their life conditions change from bad to worse, Szpilman tries to come to terms with hopelessness, with the sense of unreality, and the inexplicable horrors of life in the Warsaw Ghetto:

> It must have been the week before the action began that I met Roman Kramsztyk for the last time. He was emaciated and nervous, although he tried to hide it. He was pleased to see me. 'Not off on tour yet?' he said, trying to crack a joke. 'No,' I replied briefly. I did not feel like joking. […] He looked at me sympathetically. 'You take all this too much to heart.' 'How can I help it?' I shrugged my shoulders. He smiled, lit a cigarette, said nothing for a while, and then went on, 'You wait, it'll all be over some fine day, because …' and he waved his arms about … 'because there really isn't any sense in it, is there?' He said this with comic and rather helpless conviction, as if the utter pointlessness of what was going on was obviously an argument showing that it would end. (Szpilman, 92)

The dialogue in Szpilman's memoir indicates that without a full grasp of the situation and no way out, routine communications break down, and the cause and nature of horrors remain incomprehensible. Questions that people kept asking were about why and how this was happening to them. Szpilman could not even in retrospect reasonably explain what had happened to him and his family. The familiar mechanisms of coping with critical events tend not to work in situations where clear meaning cannot be ascribed. It has been claimed that the Holocaust could not have been witnessed as a historical event because people lacked reference frameworks to such inherent inhumanity. Dori Laub in her essay "An Event Without a Witness: Truth, Testimony, and Survival" (1992), has argued that Holocaust is unique as a historical event due to the lack of witnesses to it; and even amongst the victims, the memories have no "independent reference", that "*being inside the event"* meant nobody "could step outside of the coercively totalitarian and dehumanizing frame of reference in which the event was taking place, and provide an independent frame of reference through which the event could be observed." (Laub 1992, 81)

In this, the film adaptation mirrors the lack of frame for interpretation, of not understanding *why* all that Szpilman describes in his memoir is happening. As Wladek in film steps over dead bodies, so does the viewer become increasingly numb to their presence. The images of human suffering simply become part of the scene. Leading up to this the horrors depicted culminate in an almost

grotesque effect: when a man steals a jug of food from an old woman on the street, the resulting struggle ends with the contents of the food can on the cobblestones. The woman wails in despair whereas the man, without hesitation, gobbles the food up directly from the street. The camera focusses on the man, including people in the background who are simply looking on, still standing in line. [*The Pianist*, 0:34:35–0:35:00] (This scene is directly adapted from Szpilman's memoir, see page 74). When Szpilman describes this scene, he concurrently adopts the stance of a participant and a witness to the tragedy, as he writes: "All three of us stood rooted to the spot" (Szpilman, 74). Szpilman therefore in the memoir showed that he understood and shared the desperation of his characters, whereas in film, Wladek leans against a building witnessing this scene as a passive spectator, horrified, yet able to recognize the comic effect of what is happening in front of him.

Despite some storyline changes that affect events and characters particularly in the second half of the film, most of *The Pianist* adopts the perspective of the protagonist from Szpilman's memoir. Yet, the use of POV shots, that is considered one of the most direct methods of conveying the first-person point of view from autobiographical source material, is not extensive in this film, but rather built into the overall narrative structure. One such example is the image of Wladek when he is for the first time after two years again outside the Ghetto working on the demolition of the Ghetto walls [*The Pianist*, 0:54:34 – 0:55:25]. Szpilman sees and marvels at a totally alien "outside world", drastically different from what he has become used to:

> We stopped in Żelazna Brama Square. So there was still life like this somewhere! Street traders with baskets full of wares stood outside the market hall, now closed and presumably converted into some sort of stores by the Germans. Women were walking around the traders, bargaining, going from basket to basket, making their purchases and then moving off city centre. (Szpilman, 110)

The Pianist, as a rule, uses camera as "eyes" of the character Wladek, in combination of subtly conveyed and subdued emotional reactions of the actor Adrian Brody. Critics have argued that how Polanski uses POV shots in *The Pianist* creates an almost documentary effect:

> This technical humbleness resulted in the realistic, at times almost documentary, feel of the film: as if a camera was simply placed in the places where Szpiłman was, or else, as if his own eyes were the camera, which simply recorded what was in front of it, moving closer or farther in order to better see a scene rather than make a rhetorical statement. (Crnković 2004)

In "Unheroic Heroes: Re-Viewing Roman Polanski's 'The Pianist' in Germany and Israel" Kobi Kabalek explaines the effect of following Wladek's character in film: "[…] the viewer hardly ever leaves this Szpilman. In this sense, the film

fulfills a similar function to that of the "Holocaust Memorial Museum" in Washington, whose visitors are supposed to experience the Holocaust on a personal level […]" (Kabalek 2007, 62) In my view, the film actually achieves the opposite: the subjective camera is, indeed, often used as a "witness" to emphasize Wladek's position as an onlooker, but this lack of emontional reaction often creates a distance with the viewer. The distance between the events we see on screen and how Wladek in film struggles to make sense of them also reveals the difficulties in trying to depict the Holocaust as a historical event on film.

This "documentary effect", combined with previous knowledge about *The Pianist* as an adaptation of non-fictional text, can also be somewhat misleading: *The Pianist* is, after all, a drama film. Yet, the omissions, additions and changes that are selected for dramatic effect (or to condense the narrative time) become obvious only through direct comparison of the two texts. Both the book and the film narrative emphasize that it was hard for Szpilman, his family and friends to believe that they, affluent intellectuals and peaceful people, could be touched by the war in such ways. There was feable hope for normality described by Szpilman when he spoke of how his family had tried to manage the new situation: "My parents, sisters and brother knew there was nothing they could do. They concentrated entirely on staying in control of themselves and maintaining the fiction of ordinary daily life." (Szpilman, 94) This "fiction of ordinary", found both in the book and in film adaptation, is starkly contrasted with starving, sick and dead people lying on the streets; the horrors, hunger and degradation that people increasingly faced; and in the violence inflicted on and by them.

The film follows Szpilman's journey in a chronological order, as we learn about the isolation of the Ghetto, the deportation of his family, his escape from the Ghetto, the uprisings, and of the destruction of the city as German forces retreat. According to Szpilman, remaining together as a family appeared to be the only thing that they and rest of the Jews in Warsaw could try. As the Szpilman family faced deportation in August 1942, his brother and sister who were selected to remain as workforce in the Ghetto, decided to follow the rest of the family and be deported. There is an understanding conveyed both by the book and film that the assembly of Jews from the Ghetto had truly sinister purpose. Both Szpilman's narrative and film text describe how Jews tried to hide from the German soldiers and the Ghetto police in order to avoid this. The deportation sequence in film is also the most complex in both cinematographical and emotional sense. We see how the Szpilman family with several hundred other Jews from the Ghetto have been assembled at the deportation site and wait for transportation at *Umschlagplatz*. Camera tracks families walking towards the gathering (or "collection") point near the railway tracks. Here the emphasis is placed not on the massive crowd summoned for deportation (and horrors that await them later, that the viewer is well aware of). Rather, as the camera zooms in on one person after the next in this mass scene, the film

highlights that these people are all individuals and not a faceless body of victims. The film then cuts to the *Umschlagplatz* viewed from a high angle.

Most of the long scene at *Umschlagplatz* [*The Pianist*, 0:49:50–0:52:00] is pictured as if a presentation of order in the face of violence, dread and desperation. People walk steadily to the walled-in square. They then stand or sit in the sun. Here they have nowhere left to hide. The contrast between the glaring sun and up to then the dark and somber scenes of apartment buildings where people were trying to hide for their lives, draws parallels to Szpilman's book, where he describes the inhabitants of Ghetto as "ants" who scurry around to remain alive despite the ongoing threat of a stomping foot that may come down on them.

Even when the predominant feeling is hopelessness, still a glimpse of hope persists: there is an old man who argues with Szpilman's father about the fact that someone should do *something*, as they are sent off to be slaughtered – surely somebody should resist? We see another old man argue that since the Germans will need workers then some might still be able to save themselves. Then there is a little boy walking around and selling candies that Szpilman's father buys for the whole family to share. The boy kisses the money when he receives it, as if for good luck. A woman who struggles to walk asks for water for her dying son, but nobody can help her. The hopelessness of the situation is here and again emphasized by dialogue and through facial expressions, until the long wait in the sun is brought to an abrupt end when the train pulls onto tracks and speedily everyone is pushed onboard the cattle trucks. The panic truly starts when people are forced into already full trucks, and in the process, get separated from their loved ones. These images in the movie are most horrific, as people are pushed around and prodded exactly as if treating cattle. The inhumanity is further emphasized by how anyone who resists is brutally killed, either clubbed or shot to death. These bursts of violence contrast with the preceding long wait in the sunlight. Camera cuts quickly from one person and cattle truck to another. In this chaos, the Szpilman family still tries to stay together. The tension builds until Wladek is unexpectedly rescued by a Jewish Ghetto police officer, who recognizes him and quickly draws him through the police line.

In his memoir, Szpilman describes how he last saw his family at the *Umschlagplatz,* after he was pulled out of the line of people and was walking towards the train:

> My view was now of the closed ranks of the policemen's backs. I threw myself against them, but they did not give way. Peering past the policemen's heads I could see Mother and Regina, helped by Halina and Henryk, clambering into the trucks, while Father was looking around for me. 'Papa!' I shouted. […] One of the policemen turned and looked angrily at me. 'What the hell do you think you're doing? Go on, save yourself! […] In a flash I realized what awaited the people in the cattle trucks. My hair stood on end. I glanced behind me. I saw the open compound, the railway lines and platforms, and beyond them the streets. Driven by compulsive animal fear, I ran for the streets, slipped in among a column of Council

> workers just leaving the place, and got through the gate that way. […] Well, off they go for meltdown!' I looked the way he was pointing. The doors of the trucks had been closed, and the train was starting off, slowly and laboriously. I turned away and staggered down the empty street, weeping out loud, pursued by the fading cries of the people shut up in those trucks. It sounded like the twittering of caged birds in deadly peril. (Szpilman, 106–107)

The narration in the film [*The Pianist*, 0:42:00–0:50:29 and 0:52:00], almost exactly matches the memoir in terms of words and emotions in what follows with minor added or changed elements only. One example is that of the worker whom Szpilman encounters in the memoir as he is escaping from *Umschlagplatz*, who in film becomes a man carting bodies killed at the train square; Szpilman in his book did not describe the last moments of violence before the train doors were crammed shut (he is already escaping and does not witness it). However, this film scene accurately follows Władysław Szpilman's description of losing his family and the overall horror of what is happening. We also learn of the disbelief and guilt that he feels because he escaped. Where the book emphasizes the feelings of terror, Wladek in the film text expresses helpless grief and, most importantly, incomprehension over what has happened: he walks, sobbing, away from *Umschlagplatz* along a street covered with debris of luggage, furniture and dead bodies.

The lightning now [*The Pianist*, 0:52:15–0:52:45] is the same bright sunlight as of before, at *Umschlagplatz,* with certain otherworldliness added to the hot summer day when we observe feathers floating in the air as snowflakes. Gradually, the glaring sunlight is replaced by familiar somber grey tones. These quiet, empty streets contrast with the extreme violence of the previous sequence. Instead of extending this scene of grief – one of the few times that the character played by Adrian Brody excessively expresses emotions – the film cuts to picturing him in front of a home where he finds the family of his friend killed. Wladek then turns around in a circle, spreading his hands helplessly. His body language conveys absolute helplessness as he can do nothing but to keep wandering around in familiar places. He then enters a café where he used to perform and finds the café owner hiding under the stage, where Wladek joins him. Wladek is asked about what happened to his family but is unable to speak. [*The Pianist*, 0:53:15–0:54:40]

Here, in one of the key scenes of this film, the subdued nature of Adrien Brody's performance does not follow the expectations of what a viewer of an historical drama might have: there is no emphasis on melodrama present. Szpilman's own narrative, although also restrained, still provides ample opportunities for pathos. The fact that in the film Wladek is unable to speak of the terror he went through emphasizes again the incomprehensible nature of what is happening: it has become "normal" for people to hide, witness murder, and continue with their lives best they can, still fearing that next day this might be their own fate. However, now that Wladek's own family has faced the same

fate, he must try to come to terms with that, which creates a breaking point in both the book and the film narrative.

Szpilman refers to his survival in his memoir as "miraculous" and attributes this to people helping him. The dying children on the Ghetto streets receive no assistance, while Szpilman is saved from immediate danger many times. In a way, Szpilman's description of the miracle of his survival hangs on the understanding that what happened to him and what he witnessed *made no sense*. The notion that the situations he has faced are far beyond the realm of normal understanding is clearly expressed by character Wladek in the film by his subdued reactions. I find that this has potentially an interesting impact on the viewer: it is difficult to identify oneself with "Wladek" due to an emotional distance resulting from Adrian Brody's restrained performance. Viewers follow his journey in film as spectators, whereas the main character himself mostly acts as an onlooker. What Szpilman says about his own position towards the horrors surrounding him is not a "bystander effect" in action, but a stance on his own helplessness and lack of power, which effectively means that he prioritises survival (for himself and his family). This does not mean that he witnesses the horrors of Ghetto realities without empathy or sympathy, quite the opposite, but that he acknowledges his own lack of power regarding this. The theme of inability to act is repeated throughout the film adaptation. Wladek is depicted as someone who tries to assist but is rejected (for example, several times he asks Jews in positions of authority and later the resistance how he can contribute). He is advised: "You're an artist, Wladek, you keep people's spirits up – you do enough" [*The Pianist*, 0:23:46–48]. Wladek increasingly lacks agency in the situations that he finds himself in and by the end of the film only takes action to ensure survival. For example, Kobi Kabalek (2007) in his account of how *The Pianist* was received in Germany and Israel, described Wladek as the "unheroic hero" of *The Pianist*.

The film positions Wladek as a witness to the total destruction of not only his own life and that of his family, but that of his culture and the city of Warsaw. Wladek's position as a protagonist is that of a witness, an onlooker, and the story that film tells is indeed a story of his "miraculous survival" rather than his heroism.

3.1.2. *The Pianist* as a story of a musician

In the memoir, Szpilman often expresses how he felt responsibility for his family's survival and well-being:

> Life, although so unimportant, had none the less forced me to overcome my apathy and seek some way of earning a living, and I had found one, thank God. The work left me little time for brooding, and my awareness that the whole family depended on what I could earn gradually helped me to overcome my previous state of hopelessness and despair. (Szpilman, 11) […]

> Perhaps it was because I alone might somehow be able to save us, through my popularity as a performer, and so I felt responsible. (Szpilman, 94)

However, despite his popularity as a performer, Szpilman could do little to help himself and his family. The pressure added to his accumulating feelings of insignificance – the latter resonates also throughout the film adaptation, as for the most part, the character of "Wladek" in the movie is depicted as a helpless onlooker.

As described in the memoir (Szpilman, 113), the first moment of total despair and a turning point for Szpilman that forces him to act is when he meets the director of the Warsaw Philharmonic whom he knew from before the war. This man advises Szpilman that he will never see his family again and that he should only look after himself. "Only much later could I convince myself that he had been right to do so: the certainty of death gave me the energy to save myself at the crucial moment." However in the film, Wladek's friends help and offer a hiding place in an apartment near the Ghetto.

Most film reviews agree that *The Pianist* is carried by the performance of Adrien Brody. We observe the astounding transformation of his character from the cultured, elegantly dressed, flirtatious man from upper classes of society into an emaciated, ragged wreck of a human in the last scenes of the movie. This transformation is further pronounced at the end of the film when we see Wladek after the war, playing piano at the (possibly same) radio station. He has transformed back into an elegant pianist, appearing to look as composed as in the beginning of the film. In this scene [*The Pianist*, 2:19:20–2:30:35], his friend sees him through the glass partition of the studio, they smile and nod to each other politely. But then, overwhelmed by emotions, both tear up. When in the first scene of the film, Wladek continued with his performance despite the bombardement of the city, here he also continues to play even though he is cleary emotionally disturbed. In the closing title sequence of the film, Wladek is pictured performing together with an orchestra – again the camera focuses on his hands and face, as in the beginning of the film. His concentration on music, his performance as *a pianist* remains his focus throughout the film.

During the last days of the German occupation of Warsaw, Szpilman escapes from his hiding place to desperately search for food from the destroyed buildings. In one building he is discovered by a German officer. In both narratives, this meeting is one of the key scenes. Szpilman tells how his luck finally runs out:

> I was so absorbed in my search that I never heard anything until a voice right behind me said, "What on earth are you doing here?" A tall elegant German officer was leaning against the kitchen dresser, his arms crossed over his chest. (Szpilman, 176–177)

This is the point in the narrative where Szpilman finally capitulates: "Do what you like with me. I'm not moving from here," he tells the officer in his memoir. (Ibid.) The officer assures that he does not mean any harm. He engages

Szpilman in a conversation and asks what he does for a living. Learning that Szpilman is a musician, the officer asks him to play the piano that is in the next room. Szpilman is afraid of further discovery (and he is also skeptical about his abilities to play anything anymore), but he has nothing to lose, so he tries:

> When I placed my fingers on the keyboard they shook. So this time, for a change, I had to buy my life by playing the piano! I hadn't practised for two and a half years, my fingers were stiff and covered with a thick layer of dirt, and I had not cut my nails since the fire in the building where I was hiding. Moreover, the piano was in a room without any window panes, so its action was swollen by the damp and resisted the pressure of the keys. I played Chopin's Nocturne in C sharp minor. The glassy tinkling sound of the untuned strings rang through the empty flat and the stairway, floated through the ruins of the city and returned as a muted melancholy echo. When I had finished, the silence seemed even gloomier and more eerie than before. A cat mewed in a street somewhere. I heard a shot down below outside the building – a harsh, loud German noise. (Szpilman, 178)

In this scene from the memoir, Szpilman contrasts the music he plays (even on an out-of-tune piano and with fingers long out of practice) with the situation that surrounds them: the broken room, the German officer in an elegant uniform listening, his own desperation, and above all, the music which seems to follow outside to the night air and into the war (as contrasted by the gunshot, that "harsh, German noise"). While the contrast between beauty and culture in the face of the mindless destruction of war is glaringly obvious in the memoir, it becomes even more pronounced in the film adaptation of this scene. Here is Szpliman/Wladek who throughout both narratives has stood out as an artist. Due to this he is in a rather privileged position compared to others around him and repeatedly receives help. The Nazi soldiers in book and film have been previously characterized as emotionless animals, acting based on an irrational wish to destroy. Now, here in this scene we meet a "cultured and good German" not represented as a monster and there is no indication that he would harm Wladek. And the connection between them is created by music.

As Wladek hides from the Germans in what he assumes is an abandoned house, he hears a car stop outside, and voices as someone enters the building. He quickly climbs the stairs to the attic in an attempt to find a hiding place there. The muted voices continue downstairs when suddenly the sounds of piano music stop Wladek in his tracks. He quickly recovers and hides, but we continue to hear the muffled sounds of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* carrying over the darkened, destroyed street, accompanied by quick, rapid shots of the machine gun [*The Pianist,* 2:00:12–2:00:20].

In film, the meeting of Wladek and the unnamed German officer is thus preluded by the piano music. Wladek is depicted trying to find a way to open a can of cucumbers that he had been carrying around under his arm while escaping through the destroyed buildings. He finally hacks at the can with a fire iron and is so single-mindedly focused on his work that he becomes oblivious to

the surroundings. The can drops from his hold and rolls on the floor and camera follows its movement towards the stairs, liquid spilling from the can. The camera slowly turns to the stairs and we see a German officer standing there. The point-of-view shot is used here as we follow Wladek's eyes, camera panning over the floor in pursuit of the can, leading to a sudden shock of seeing a German uniform. The positive turn that follows is more alarming considering how German officers have been depicted in the film so far – as unfeeling, uncaring and often monstrous in their actions. As Wladek starts playing the piano, the focus of the camera returns to his hands and face, as if now following the point-of-view of the German officer listening to the music. The dialogue is not an exact adaptation from the book. Still, sentimentality echoes through as the officer asks Wladek "who he is and what is his profession," and Wladek answers hesitantly that he "was… is, a pianist". [*The Pianist*, 2:02:50] Wladek is then asked by the officer to follow him to the piano and play something. The room, like the whole house, is in ruins but, astonishingly, the piano remains untouched, if dusty. Through the blackout drapes covering the windows, a ray of light captures Wladek as he sits at the piano, holding his hands tight together. In this scene, Wladek *becomes* again the pianist that he believes himself still to be. [*The Pianist,* 2:04:10] Similarly, but in reversed order to the opening scenes of the movie, the camera cuts to the pianist's figure, bathed in light, then to his face and finally to a long close-up of his hands. The camera also constantly cuts, as in contrast, to the close-up of the officer, first standing, then sitting, listening, captivated by the performance. The scene appears almost otherworldly in nature, as Wladek plays incredibly well on the piano that obviously could not have created this perfect a sound. The film here asks viewers to suspend disbelief, or perhaps the intention is to point to the surreal in the situation. One possible explanation is that the beautifully played music is only in the imagination of the player, a parallel drawn to how Wladek in his previous hiding places has been depicted silently playing the piano by moving his fingers through the air in imitation, still accompanied by an extradiegetic sound of the piece of music. Or perhaps a reference has been made to the imagination of the German officer?

The use of music in *The Pianist* thus aims to contrast between culture and war, civilization and horrors of violence. Music has been essential for Wladek's character and his survival. In the encounter with the German officer that unexpectedly did not end in tragedy, Władysław Szpilman in his book and "Wladek" in film seem to survive largely thanks to their art. This can be interpreted directly as a reference to how Szpilman/Wladek had nothing else left to live for *but* the art. As Szpilman describes in the quote above, he has been "playing for his life" throughout the war and only here, what he perceives to be the end, he really understands it. The theme of "performing for survival" has been rather widely examined in films dealing with the Holocaust events. For example, Deb Waterhouse-Watson and Adam Brown examine in their article "Playing for Their Lives: Music, Musicians and Trauma in Holocaust Film" how use of music in film texts impacts "the (re-)construction of the Holocaust in popular culture and memory" (Waterhouse-Watson and Brown 2015, 4).

Music in *The Pianist* has been viewed by some critics as a "profoundly civilizing force, both what saves us from barbarism and what is worth saving from it" (Kramer 2007, 67)[49]. Waterhouse-Watson and Brown also highlight that music in Roman Polanski's interpretation of Szpilman's memoirs is used as a life-saving resource. Władysław Szpilman has confirmed this in his memoir where he desribes how he suffered severe depression after his escape from the Ghetto. In film, as he hides after escaping from the Ghetto, the music (even when Wladek pretends to play without sound, afraid to alert his neighbours), provides him with the one constant, a connection to his life before the war.[50] For Waterhouse-Watson and Brown, this interpretation and use of music as a saving element constitutes as sentimentality, even something that "deflects attention from the genocide" (Waterhouse-Watson and Brown 2015, 9). Others, however, have viewed music as a connection, something that confirms the positive of the human nature in face of all the horrors:

> This moment – communicated by the wordless gestures of sight and the language of music alone – condenses the breadth of recuperative experience of which Szpilman has been so tragically bereft. Ensconced within the framework of rhythm and sound created by a fellow Pole who lived a century earlier, Szpilman is able to give form and meaning to a world of experience and, at least momentarily, to begin to reconstitute the possibility of a receptive other. It is not that he is making music which is so important, but that his music-making is heard. (Stein 2007, 451)

From the opening scenes of the film onwards, music is also used to indicate whose story we are to follow – that of an almost stereotypical character of a musician, a pianist removed from the concerns of everyday life and politics. Recurring pieces of performance accompany the narrative, as Szpilman is portrayed in the first scenes of the film, then in the culmination of the movie when he plays for his survival, and finally, in the concluding scene where he performs at the studio. As much as the film is a portrayal of humanity's worst moments, it is also a story of one man's survival through kindness of others. People who help Szpilman might do it because of who he is, a famous cultural figure, or simply a great artist. Wherein the film narrative starts and ends with a scene that conveys the tranquility that the main character finds in music, the concluding scene seems to make clear that despite the destruction and horrors of war and genocide, the main character has refound his identity as a great artist – and perhaps, as the story of his miraculous survival seems to attest, throughout his suffering, he never lost that identity. The film offers a portrait of a musician as a witness, often making use of pointing out the "stereotypical artistic sensitivity" of Wladek's character to infer that he can, at most, be a witness, but never the hero of the story.

[49] See also Waterhouse-Watson and Brown (2015, 4).

[50] Or as Waterhouse-Watson and Brown explain it, in this, "Polanski's Szpilman maintains some semblance of hope with music as his constant companion". (Ibid.)

The cliché-like approach that Polanski takes in the scene discussed on previous pages, when depicting how Wladek meets with the German officer; the atmosphere of the scene and the aesthetic tools of lighting, camera and soundtrack, emphasize that Wladek's fate is very different thanks to his character as an artist. Polanski creates an almost dream-like atmosphere in his film adaptation of this meeting, which he attains through the effects of lighting, extreme and mid-focus close-ups on the pianist and the silent officer, but most notably, through the near-perfect (unbelievably so) recital of the piece played on the piano (as if both characters are suddenly transported from amidst the war into a concert hall). The initial dread slowly dissipates as the performance progresses, in what is an almost word-for-word "transposition" of the narrative and emotion in Szpilman's own account.

Here, *The Pianist* functions not only as a historical film, but emphasizes the biography of its main character. Yet interestingly, although the narrative is character-centered (we often follow the main character's point of view), we learn very little about Wladek as a person. This, combined with the subdued approach of Adrien Brody in his portrayal of Władysław Szpilman creates a definitive emotional distance with the viewers.

It would be simplified to conclude that the book and film adaptation are a story about how Władysław Szpilman escapes the fate of many of his fellow Jews thanks to his fame as a pianist, or that his "luck" and "miraculous survival" hinges on his character as a musician. He is indeed portrayed as a victim with little to no agency of his own. Neither does Szpilman in his book describe a fight against overwhelming odds, in fact, both in book and in film he is actively discouraged from engaging in and protected by friends and enemies alike.

As a character-centered narrative, *The Pianist* complies with the expectations of the biographical film on one hand, and, concentrating on the point-of-view of the protagonist, follows its adapted source text very closely. On the other hand, the film works almost as a witness statement. Therefore, *The Pianist* cannot be viewed solely as a biographical film because the personal story is overshadowed by the historical events of the Holocaust and its representations in contemporary culture.

3.1.3. The issues with genre expectations: the "Holocaust film" and *The Pianist*

As described in W. Szpilman's memoir, the unnamed Wehrmacht officer to whom Szpilman plays the piano helps him by bringing him food and news. In the postscript to the memoir Szpilman wonders whether this "*one human being* wearing the German uniform – […] got safely home again." (Szpilman, 190) However, we learn from the epilogue (by Wolf Biermann) that this was just hopeful thinking because Wilm (Wilhelm Adalbert) Hosenfeld, who helped Szpilman, survived the war but he was incarcerated in a labor camp near Stalingrad. Hosenfeld unsuccessfully tried to reach out to Szpilman and others

he assisted during the war, but despite the attempts that both Jews and Poles made to free him, he suffered years of torture in the Soviet labor camp where he died in 1952 at the age of 57. In the film, there is a scene from at the end of the war in Poland where Hosenfeld, as he awaits his punishment together with other detained German soldiers, asks the passing Polish prisoners to contact "Szpilman". Only one man stops to listen but does not catch the name – the name is heard, through a Russian soldier's shouted orders to "move on", faintly, as "Hosenfeld". [*The Pianist*, 2:18:50–53]. Here, the film adaptation extends Szpilman's own narrative. Whereas the re-publications of the memoir do contain extracts from Hosenfeld's diary and an epilogue by Biermann titled "A Bridge Between Władysław Szpilman and Wilm Hosenfeld", the character we meet in Szpilman's own story remains unnamed.

The choice by film director Roman Polanski to offer a rather brief and one-dimensional characterizations of individuals, particularly in the case of portrayal of W. Hosenfeld, has invited criticism. Some have found that ignoring much of the storyline related to Hosenfeld who took great personal risks to assist Jews and Poles during the war, features as in contrast to the inhumane German soldiers and Gestapo officers who brutalized the Jews in the Ghetto scenes. For example, James Morrison (2007) in his overview of Roman Polanski's filmography interprets the actions of Hosenfeld's character in the screen adaptation as cynically self-serving, arguing that it was not kindness (or "Schindler-like nobility" as Morrison calls it) but simply the impact that Wladek playing on the piano had on him that motivated the help (Morrison 2007, 151). According to Morrison, the approach by Polanski "leaves the unfortunate implication that Hosenfeld assists Szpilman because of the beauty of his playing – that culture really can be an antidote to politics, as Wladyslaw believes at the film's outset" (Ibid.).

This example of criticism towards *The Pianist* reveals how comparisons between historical and literary source materials to film adaptations are subject to "the fidelity debate". For example, in his review of *The Pianist* from 2003 (titled "Schindler's Liszt. Roman Polanski's mistake about the Holocaust."), Michael B. Oren directly complains over lack of fidelity in Polanski's film adaptation: "Polanski did not merely re-create Szpilman's idiosyncratic book. He also altered, embellished, and distorted it." (Oren, 2003) In fact, Oren refers to the above discussed scenes between Wladek and Hosenfeld as: "the films most poignant misrepresentation" (Ibid.). Indeed, I partially agree with Oren on that – without reading the afterword and excerpts from Hosenfeld's diary in the memoir by Szpilman – Szpilman's own narrative could be interpreted as if:

> [...] had Szpilman identified himself as a spot welder, say, instead of a pianist, Hosenfeld would have shot him instantly. Ignorant of the real Hosenfeld's character, we see him as a monster transformed by music – a particularly Germanic redemption – and music played flawlessly, implausibly, by a physically devastated Jew. (Ibid.)

Here, the author criticises Polanski for what he considers a deliberate avoidance of granting Hosenfeld's story a historical role.[51] However, the encounter between Hosenfeld and Wladek in the film in comparison to the memoir, in my opinion, demonstrates that Polanski follows the book text almost to the letter. In essence, Szpilman states that he has no expectation to survive – he does not know Hosenfeld's character and merely sees a "Nazi uniform," so he believes that his luck has finally run out and he will likely be killed soon. Playing the piano for this German officer is what Szpilman believes is another degradation that he must suffer – yet he overcomes it by immersing himself in music. Neither narrative provides additional information but the weary officer in the film does not seem that threatening even before he learns that Wladek is a pianist. It is the "Nazi uniform" that represents fear, both for the character of Wladek and the viewers.

While most feedback to the film adaptation by Polanski has been overwhelmingly positive, others have ascribed the film's international success to it being a "traditional, technically perfect Hollywood production," a melodrama that avoids some crucial debates such as collaboration versus resistance and punishment for crimes committed during the Holocaust. The fact that *The Pianist* focuses on individual experience with little attention to history in wider context has also been criticised as an attempt to make this movie "safe" for international and Polish audiences. (Röger 2013, 211)

The Pianist was co-produced by France, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Poland, and marketed to international audiences. Although the film was created for distribution on the international market, it has had an impact at national level. It prompted a series of public discussions and publications around various aspects of the film that revealed historical and personal connections, among others, the fact that the film director Roman Polanski, also a Polish Jew, was a Holocaust survivor.[52] Overall, *The Pianist* was very well received by both

[51] Szpilman mentions several historical figures whose names carry much weight today regarding the remembrance of the Holocaust and resistance movement in Poland. For example, Janusz Korszak, who tried to save many orphaned Jewish children in Warsaw and followed his charges to death at the extermination camp. Along with Marek Edelman and other leaders of the Jewish resistance, these historical figures are recognizable to the viewer who has prior historical knowledge of the events. However, they are not given much attention as individual characters in the film adaptation.

[52] Some reviews (e.g. Scott, 2002) have drawn parallels between the film adaptation and the personal story of Roman Polanski as its director. Polanski, as a child, survived the Holocaust events in Krakow. He escaped, thanks to a Polish family, but lost his own family to the concentration camps. So, obviously, when talking about making *The Pianist*, Polanski both was expected to mention his own past experiences and discuss these in connection with working on the film: "It is the most important film in my career, […] Obviously, emotionally it is a work which cannot be compared with anything I have done so far, because it takes me back to the times which I still remember." (Green 2001) This parallel between the adapted content and the personal experiences of the film director suggests that, in Polanski's interpretation, he can truly relate to Szpilman's story because of his past. Thus there is a sense in which he film adaptation gains more authority.

critics and the general public worldwide. The film received much praise and several awards, most notable of which are the Palme d'Or at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival; the Oscars for Best Director (Roman Polanski), Best Adapted Screenplay (Ronald Harwood), and Best Actor (Adrian Brody) at the 75th Academy Awards; as well as the BAFTA Award for Best Film and Best Direction (2002).[53]

For a few critics, such as Michael B. Oren, however, it was a surprise that the film was so well received by audiences and critics alike:

> All these accolades are surprising for a film that is marred by two-dimensional performances, dozens of undeveloped characters, a sluggish plot, and a protagonist who learns nothing from his horrific experiences. Perhaps the praise for *The Pianist* is just the inevitable consequence of its subject matter. A director who escaped the Krakow ghetto as a child and whose mother perished in Auschwitz has made a film about the Holocaust. This confers upon it immediate cultural sanctity. Never mind that the film brings no departure from Polanski's longtime preoccupation with cruelty and isolation. It also adds exactly nothing to the iconography or the understanding of the Holocaust: we have already seen these images of Jews randomly selected and shot, and more graphically, in *Schindler's List*. (Oren 2003) [my emphasis]

The underlined text sheds some light on issues that often arise in "Holocaust films", namely questions about authenticity, ethical implications and issues concerning genre. Not only does Oren view *The Pianist* as "emotionally shallow", but he accuses the film of both "moral and historical shallowness" because instead of emphasizing the fate of millions who suffered and died, the film concentrates on W. Szpilman as a musician and on his "undying music". Overall, Oren finds that the film adaptation does not add any value to the Holocaust film *as a genre*. As the quotes above and below demonstrate, Oren's review is an illustrative example of how any film that focuses on Holocaust must face expectations regarding its artistic and historical representation. Oren summarizes:

> Brave critics took *Schindler's List* to task for using Jews as props for a German's morality play, and *Life Is Beautiful* for sugarcoating the camps. The former diminished the humanity of the victims; the latter diminished the guilt of the perpetrators. *The Pianist* manages to repeat both these sins. Is it really so difficult to represent the Jew as a full and free-willed human being, without diluting the horror? (Oren 2003)

Overwhelmingly, the story of the Holocaust is not a story of survival. Yet it is possible to learn about the Holocaust via the narratives of people who witnessed the event, and the testimonies of those who survived. Some reviewers of *The Pianist* reflected on this dilemma by contemplating:

[53] See for example the Internet Movie Database: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0253474/

> Szpilman's recollections, published shortly after the war, offer, like other such books, a deeply paradoxical impression of the Holocaust. Accounts of survival, that is, are both representative and anomalous; they at once record this all but unimaginable historical catastrophe and, without intentional mendacity or inaccuracy, distort it. (Scott 2002)

Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) is a fiction film that was also much criticized for its "distorted" representation of the Holocaust for concentrating on stories of survival and individual heroism, arguably, thereby diminishing the suffering of millions. Roberto Benigni's film *Life is Beautiful* (1997) tells a story of one child's experiences with the terrors of the Holocaust in a comedy genre – something that, concerning the subject matter, was hard to accept. Lawrence Baron, however, has described this debate, as follows:

> To achieve their fame and fans, did these films desecrate or trivialize the memory of the Holocaust? Did they imagine the unimaginable? […] The criticisms leveled at *Schindler's List* and *Life Is Beautiful* are premised on two assumptions. The first asserts that since the Holocaust is "unique" and "exists outside of human meaning," it can never be accurately represented in cinema or literature. The second assumption concedes that even though it might be possible to approximate what the Holocaust was like in feature films and novels, such portrayals must mirror the reality that "most of the Jews died, most of the Germans collaborated with the perpetrators or remained passive bystanders, and most of the victims sent to the showers were gassed". (Baron 2005, 2–3)

As a motion picture, *The Pianist* has indeed most often been viewed as a "Holocaust film". Following the Second World War, many films of all genres have been produced depicting the Holocaust in some way. Especially over the last 30 years, the so-called Holocaust cinema has enjoyed a huge success and this attention seems to be ongoing. Although it seems that the "Holocaust films" have become a recognizable part of contemporary mass culture, it is difficualt to determine which films could and should be included in this genre.

In his discussion of postmodern cinema in *Afterimage: Film, Trauma and the Holocaust*, Joshua Hirsch (2004) discusses documentaries and fiction films about the Holocaust in the framework of "posttraumatic cinema". Lawrence Baron in *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present: The Changing Focus of Contemporary Holocaust Cinema* (2005) reviews the thematic shifts that characterize the contemporary "Holocaust film". Yet Hirsch and Baron fail to find that films about Holocaust share enough common characteristics to classify the "Holocaust film" *as a genre*. Despite this assessment, Baron argues that Holocaust films share some common characteristics, particularly those produced in Hollywood:

> *Schindler's List* neatly balances scenes of relentless brutality with the moral redemption of its hero. It follows a common pattern in Holocaust movies, employing a double narrative in which the main characters escape execution while secondary ones do not. (Baron 2005, 14)

Other authors such as Annette Insdorf have disagreed and believe that "Holocaust films" can indeed be considered as "constituting a genre". Insdorf in *Indelible Shadows* (3rd edition, 2003) describes fascination with the development of the "Holocaust film" into "a genre" in the second half of the 20th century:

> It never occurred to me that, by the year 2001, films about the Nazi era and its Jewish victims would be so numerous as to constitute a veritable genre – including consistent Oscar winners – nor did I foresee how this genre would be part of wider cultural embracing of the Shoah. (Insdorf 2003, 245)

How these films are produced and received depends on intended target audiences: an important film that addresses the past of one nation may be assigned a different meaning by international audiences. Still, the international success of films such as Pawel Pawlikowski's *Ida* (2013) and László Nemes' *Son of Saul* (2015) have demonstrated that historical drama films addressing Holocaust can gain international success and accolades by both viewers and critics even when produced by international (not Hollywood) film companies.

There are various issues to be considered when depicting the Holocaust on screen. In addition to the reductionist tendency to generalize suffering onto individual heroes, a tendency which "most Holocaust cinema" has been accused of, there are also concerns regarding the form and aesthetics of representing Holocaust subjects on film. Ethical and aesthetic issues around relationships to past/memory are common to all (historical) films depicting atrocities, but in the case of the "Holocaust films" the sensitivities are often taken to the extremes. Author and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel has famously said that "[O]ne does not imagine the unimaginable. And, in particular one does not show it on screen." (Wiesel 2003, xi) Claude Lanzmann, for example, refused to use archive images in his documentary *Shoah* (1985), claiming "resistance to representation" of that what cannot be understood and therefore represented.[54]

Debates over whether one could or should show the Holocaust on screen have been present since the first films that depicted these traumatic events were produced – both the documentaries and fiction films. Some of the challenges and questions that filmmakers and audiences have faced have been: how do we represent and remember the Holocaust, especially in fiction film? How do these representations influence the understanding of history of the viewers? And is it ethical to earn profit and use such a subject matter as Holocaust for entertainment value?

Libby Saxton in *Haunted Images. Film, Ethics, Testimony and the Holocaust* (2008) focuses on issues linked to "un-representability", testimony and ethics when debating the "role of film as witness to the Holocaust". Saxton views "the

[54] As noted by Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman in their introduction to the issues and changes in the Holocaust film: *Concentrationary Cinema: Aesthetics as Political Resistance in Alain Resnais's* Night and Fog *(1955)* (2012, 38).

film image as document, as evidence, as proof and as weapon, screen and shield, but, above all, as witness to the other's suffering, as testimony to injustice." (Saxton 2008, 6)[55]

As the reference to Saxton indicates, some stylistic means employed by fiction film directors have prompted criticism for attempting to "make the intolerable tolerable."[56] This kind of criticism highlights the ongoing discussion of ethical and representational problems linked to, and activated by, Holocaust film. One of the earliest examples of this important discussion is French critic Jacques Rivette's (1961) review of Italian Gillo Pontecorvo's *Kapò* (1960), a film that depicts life and deaths at a concentration camp. In his review, Rivette criticises one specific tracking shot used in *Kapò,* finding it deserving "deepest contempt" (1961). Contrasting *Kapò* to the French short documentary *Night and Fog* (directed by Alain Resnais, 1956), Rivette argues that attempts at realism in fiction films are inherently futile since "every attempt at reenactment or pathetic and grotesque make-up, every traditional approach to 'spectacle' partakes in voyeurism and pornography" (Rivette, 1961). Rivette's criticism became formative: it was taken up decades later by French film critic Serge Daney, and others have repeated these ideas in reference to conflicts between art and entertainment in connection with depicting the Holocaust in films.

In the introduction to a collection of essays from 2011 on above-mentioned *Night and Fog* (1956)*,* Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman refer to this film by using the term "concentrationary cinema." For Pollock and Silverman, concentrationary cinema "utilize[es] radical techniques of montage and disorientation, camera movements and counterpointed commentary to explore invisible knowledge hidden by normalized, documentary presentation of a real that could became bland and opaque unless agitated by disturbing juxtapositions and prolonged visual attentiveness". (Pollock and Silverman, 2014, 1–2). Through camera effects such as "travelling shots and shocking montage", according to Pollock and Silverman, concentrationary cinema "exposes us to contamination" by "shock[ing] us out of comforting dichotomies that keep the past 'over there'" (Ibid., 2). As editors, Pollock and Silverman asked various

[55] As little photographic or filmic evidence remains from Holocaust, Saxton views Holocaust films as being "haunted by these missing images", which, she proposes, work as a "catalyst for aesthetic and ethical innovation, for an ongoing search for more responsible forms of witnessing" (Saxton 2008, 2). However, Saxton (2008, 120) warns that these "limits" of representation are "persistent concerns" in the case of Holocaust films, noting that these same ethical and aesthetical issues apply to depicting modern events as well.

[56] *The Pianist* strongly suggests that the point of view belongs to Szpilman or that it is his perspective that the movie presents. In the movie Wladek often looks out of windows (or cracked doors, or holes in walls). This framing of the images serves to distance from the events and emphasize his role as an onlooker and that of the audience as a spectator. In her book chapter titled "Through the Spyhole: Death, Ethics and Spectatorship" (2008, 68-91), Libby Saxton uses the film *Kornblumenbau* (1988) by Leszek Wosiewicz as an example of how by casting "protagonists as observers and witnesses," film "invites us to consider the responsibilities conferred on viewers by the spectacle of violence, whether we are witnessing it first-hand, without mediation, or watching it on a screen." (Ibid., 69)

contributors to this collection of essays to consider *Night and Fog* not as a representation of a "Holocaust film" and the possible failures of representativity therein, but they claimed that viewing it outside of that frame blends into consideration of "[w]hat place might cinema as a visual technology and a mass medium itself have had in creating and sustaining the *concentrationary* imaginary and massified aesthetics of Nazi totalitarism." (Ibid., 37)

Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) and Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard)* have been, and to a large extent still are, considered the main representatives of an iconic Holocaust documentary. In fiction film, preceding the popularity of Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, Sidney Lumet's *The Pawnbroker* (1964) (an adaptation in the form of a fictionalized drama in which the "present" is connected to the "past" through flashbacks to a concentration camp) filled the role of what today is considered as "Holocaust drama". Consequently, opinions have been polarized regarding what to consider the first examples of the "Holocaust film"– as represented in Rivette's review. However, both documentaries and fiction films are examples of how the mainstream cinema and TV can reach their audiences and pass on historical knowledge.

In regards to adaptations, the diary of Anne Frank (*The Diary of a Young Girl*, first published in Dutch *Het Achterhuis*, 1947) is perhaps best known; this is a text that has been adapted to many different forms of art. However, while the various adaptations of Anne Frank's diary demonstrate how one text can gain such an influence that its movement across different times and cultures becomes almost inevitable, it also sheds light on another matter concerning adaption of Holocaust texts. As each adaptation adds something, a new view, or confirms to the established understanding of a text (in this case a diary), it also adds its own interpretation not only of the original but also of other adaptations and, overall, of how the Holocaust as an historical event is depicted. Indeed, Holocaust film in a wider perspective cannot be viewed in isolation of other film genres, be it war film or other examples, and constant cross-referencing between various interpretations takes place.

Consider the following text, quoted from a positive review of *Son of Saul* (2016) in which the reviewer Ann Hornaday sees the value of this motion picture in being "reimaginative" regarding the "Holocaust-movie genre". This review claims that "[t]he Holocaust movie as a genre has become […] singularly problematic", characterizing the Holocaust films as "mired in pietistic melodrama and safe aesthetic distance" and only "important in content", but rarely in form:

> Exemplified most notably by "Schindler's List," which focused on an apolitical businessman who gradually decides he must save the lives of his Polish Jewish workers, the classic Holocaust film has come to mean a few readily identifiable tropes, including improbable heroes, the fight for survival, carefully arranged tableaus of emaciated bodies and the inevitable vista of barracks, with ominous wisps of smoke rising from the crematorium chimneys. These images have become so ubiquitous that they've

> taken on a rote, ritualistic quality, the reenactments almost obscene in their attention to fetishistic detail. There are at least 11 million stories to be told from the carnage of Adolf Hitler's genocidal ambitions during World War II, counting the ghastly end game of the Final Solution. Is it possible for a filmmaker to tell them with any kind of freshness and vigor, to jolt viewers out of their perceived familiarity and into the dread, terror and confusion of the experience itself? (Hornaday 2016)

I both agree and disagree with this assessment by Hornaday. As in the years following the success of the film *Schindler's List*, the subject matter has undoubtedly found much use in popular cinema, certain images are repeated throughout films. This might be a "stage setting" for historical accuracy or an effort to produce a recognition effect. That the attention to detail is intensive can be an indication of how seriously filmmakers are approaching the sensitive subject matter. The question however is warranted in regards to whether decades after the adoption of the Holocaust as an accepted subject in main-stream cinema, can the approach filmmakers take retain both respect for the event as well as freshness of presentation? As there are hundreds of films that in one way or another deal with the subject of the Holocaust, one can ask, as the reviewer does above, whether these films all copy each other, at least in terms of visual representation of the "readily identifiable tropes"?

Whereas many Holocaust films are criticized for their misrepresentation of historical events in order to focus on personal stories, *The Pianist* is different. It has overwhelmingly been regarded as a success (despite the few critical opinions mentioned previously) both artistically and in terms of authenticity of representation of historical events, and as an adaptation. When viewing *The Pianist* as an historical film, the effort to present an "historically accurate" picture of the past is evident. There seems to be a general agreement[57] on the fact that Polanski managed to depict World War II events and the Holocaust in Warsaw with accuracy. When the filmmakers select to use easily identifiable images, they find themselves in a circle of overly-familiar material, thus constantly using and re-using the same imaginative legacy that the first films depicting the Holocaust included. However, leaving aside the historical accuracy of costumes and settings, *The Pianist* re-creates the war-time Warsaw in a believable way. This "accuracy" in representing the past adds to the veracity of historical films. Another question is whether this accuracy adds value to the story, or whether the aim is to please the audience, to add a certain recognizability. Again, I would say that *The Pianist* serves both purposes.

The simplistic and linear narration in Roman Polanski's film adapts almost "word-for-word" the most memorable images and scenes from the book, with few added elements. Polanski also includes many "photographic images" in the film where the film pauses on certain shots, emphasizing these by a long focus, without commentary, without placing them directly in a narrative flow (see for

[57] See for example https://worldwariifilms.weebly.com/the-pianist.html

example, closing of the Ghetto walls [*The Pianist*, 0:16:39–0:16:52]). The stand-out of such images in film is the *Umschlagsplatz* after the deportation scene that is photographed as a closed-in square guarded by barbed wire. This square is littered with luggage, but there are no dead bodies in sight. This, unmoving image stays on screen for several seconds. (This image has no soundtrack in contrast to the soul-wrenching music that preceded the scene, accompanied by images of Wladek's despair as he searched the Ghetto for anyone alive.) [*The Pianist*, 0:53:18–0:53:22]

Overall, one can cynically question whether Holocaust films are yet another example of historical events that form part of the contemporary consumer culture.[58] These films are, after all, mostly produced with a clear marketing plan (which quite often is also a successful one). The fact that the horrors of the Holocaust are depicted in main-stream media serves the purpose of remembrance and education, but also makes these films part of the entertainment industry.

As to the *authenticity* of the representation of the Holocaust on film is at the heart of many debates, one can ask whether Polanski's personal past adds or detracts from the film as adaptation? Another way of phrasing this question is to ask this whether, as a viewer approaching this film, this information is necessary for experiencing the story? In my opinion, it is not necessary in order to experience the film and "gain historical knowledge" from it. For the viewer, it is enough to know that the film is "based on a true story", and a further effect of authenticity is added by the fact that the film is an adaption of a book wherein the protagonist of the film has told his story in his own words. Furthermore, knowledge about the adapted text, Szpilman's memoir, is not truly necessary in detail, beyond this claim of "based on the true story". Yet, as some reviewers of this film have claimed, the effect of Polanski's film lies in his past, something which indicates their belief that only people who have experienced the horrors themselves have any hope of creating a credible story of the Holocaust:

> There's a difference between authenticity and credibility. Spielberg made a film full of the former, but his characters lacked credibility. […] In the end, his engrossing movie still felt like a movie. The Holocaust demands something more – a higher standard of reality, perhaps, or the sense of testament. That's why documentaries have often been more successful at dealing with it; they have the power to bear witness. With *The Pianist*, his best movie since Chinatown in 1974, Roman Polanski does just that. He's telling someone else's story, but it's a displaced form of autobiography. "I have never done, and don't intend to do, anything autobiographical, but making *The Pianist*, I could use the experiences I went through," he says. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2003) [my emphasis]

[58] See also Baron (2005) and Stubbs (2013).

Whether the claim that representing the Holocaust on screen does indeed require a "higher standard of reality" is true or not, Polanski himself certainly seemed to understand the effects that his past might have had on his interpretation of Szpilman's story:

> "I can tell you I always wanted to make the picture, a picture about those things in that period in particular. But I didn't want to do it about Krakow – it was just too close to home," […] "When you make a movie, you always superimpose the movie set over the real streets and the movie characters over the people that you remembered. … I would never do it." (Flax 2015)[59]

Indeed, for many critics, it is not only Szpilman's experience but also Polanski's that have influenced the film's reception.[60] Considering *The Pianist* as a Holocaust film, the director Roman Polanski's personal experiences during the war add another layer to the interpretation and evaluation of the film's "authenticity".

The context of the story of Władysław Szpilman's miraculous survival of the genocide in Warsaw makes it impossible to regard the film *The Pianist* as anything else than a motion picture about Holocaust. This film was produced at the turn of the century, a time when the politically and socially sensitive, emotionally traumatic and often perspectively controversial stories were increasingly depicted in films.

Perhaps thanks to the development of the Holocaust film as a genre, today the cinematographic forms of Holocaust films have broadened not only in the artistic sense (as lauded in the *Son of Saul* review above), but by offering different perspectives on the events that involve millions of different stories of human suffering, each equally relevant:

> In the light of this research it becomes clear that the first decade and a half of the twenty-first century has seen a new quality of cinematic engagement with the Holocaust, one that responds to the changing historical setting as well as to the manner in which mediated memory replaces communicative memory. (Kobrynskyy and Bayer 2015, 6)

I agree that Polanski's film contains many stereotypical and one-dimensional characters, cliché-like choices,[61] and effects that oftentimes fall into the category of overloading the viewer many expected and recognizable images of terror and genocide. The latter combined with the lack of emotional engagement presented by the protagonist may be aimed at inciting the feeling of numbness

[59] As transcribed and presented by Peter Flax in the synopsis of the interview with Roman Polanski on December 4th, 2005 (available as podcast), see: https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/features/holocaust-survivors/roman-polanksi/

[60] See also Kabalek (2007, 62) and Crnković (2004).

[61] One example is the addition of the heroine Dorota to the story. She is a member of the Polish resistance, who even when heavily pregnant, still helps Wladek in hiding.

in the viewer towards inhumanities witnessed on screen. However, neither can *The Pianist* be viewed solely as a story of "art overcoming suffering," nor does it fall into the trap of "individual heroism" that so many "Holocaust melodramas" are accused of. As Wladek is "saved" by the German officer and he is portrayed at the end of the movie once again as a celebrated artist – the final conclusion may be that not all of those who survive horrors do so because of their own tenacity or heroism. And heroes – like the character of W. Hosenfeld – often do not receive the just treatment they deserve.

The Pianist as a Holocaust film is in my opinion an excellent example of how historical drama as an adaptation of non-fictional text like memoir must contend with pre-conceived notions of historical and biographical "truths" and with genre expectations (in terms of how to "show Holocaust on screen", but also how to do so by following the "rules of Hollywood," here meaning: giving marketable results), with the addition of metatextual implications like Roman Polanski's own childhood during the war.

3.1.4. Chapter conclusion

The Pianist is a film that sets the subject of the Holocaust into personal perspective. I have previously emphasized that this movie, as an adaptation, "faithfully" follows the narrative of its source text. However, it may be questioned whether it is only the context of the story of Władysław Szpilman's miraculous survival of the genocide in Warsaw, the perspective of the adapted memoirs that is the story told by W. Szpilman, that reaches the screen? Could one definitively conclude that the filmmakers aimed solely to tell a cinematographic story of the Holocaust as it was experienced by Władysław Szpilman, the main character?

Were it possible to consider *The Pianist* outside of the context of the "Holocaust cinema", the choice of Polanski to present Wladek as he does, as a character who is distanced from the realities of life, a disinterested artist whose art saves him from suffering, might perhaps not invoke such criticism as for example Michael Oren has expressed in the review quoted above. After all, Wladek's character is by no means a hero, neither in the memoir nor in the film adaptation, so the obvious conclusion is that the director has followed the source material to the letter. However, from the memoir, my impression is that the author has tried to give an honest account of what happened to him during the war and how his survival is nothing else but "miraculous". The film adaptation incorporates this theme, however the emphasis on Wladek as the spectator has a different effect on screen than it does in the book: the restraint that Szpilman in the book often shows does not indicate a lack of emotional engagement with the events he describes. In film, the cumulative effect of emotional distance that is created by the extensive use of POV shots combined with Adrian Brody's downplayed body language and speech, directs the viewer into interpreting his character as aloof, disbelieving, an artist removed from menial politics and totally committed to his music. Yet, his inability and refusal

to fight to overcome the odds and become a hero, does not mean that Polanski's adaptation of W. Szpilman's story and the character presented by A. Brody fall short from the perspective of "fidelity". As a historical-biographical film and an adaptation, *The Pianist* closely follows its source material in terms of both historical-biographical facts and the story in adapted text. The sense of "distortion" however (that some reviewers have referred to), illustrates the same issue that all adaptations and, indeed, all historical and biographical films share: fidelity versus interpretation. This involves not only the interpretive choices that filmmakers take up as an artistic licence, but also the pre-conceived notions of "true (his)story" and genre expectations that viewers attach to the material. The results are impacted by what the reader/viewer knows about the actual events that happened compared to new information received from film.

As any other human actions and experiences, the understanding of Holocaust is open for interpretations in literature and in film. Undoubtedly, the popularity of the memoir and film adaptation has made important contributions to how the Holocaust is re-memorized in contemporary culture.

As an adaptation of Szpilman's autobiographical narrative, *The Pianist* presents memorable scenes from the book in a detailed – and what can be considered very *faithful* – manner. Intentional distance between the protagonist and the viewer emphasizes the surreal, unrelatable nature of horrors that victims of the Holocaust experienced. Because of (or despite of, one could also argue) often overly simplistic and never overly emotional narrative, *The Pianist* is engaging for viewers. and by highlighting "historical accuracy" in an easily recognizable imagery, it is not surprising that (as much as any historical drama can achieve it) *The Pianist* has been viewed as an "accurate" description of history. This perception has been cemented by the fact that the film is an adaptation of W. Szpilman's own narrative, it incorporates his perspective on events (and using both the POV shots as-if representing the original narrator's point of view from the source text in close "translation"). The credibility is further enhanced by the experiences that Roman Polanski brings to the table. I find it interesting that by the extensive use of subjective camera work and rather accurately adapted source material, the film concentrates intentionally on the *outer* perspective – on what the character sees and witnesses. As a biographical individual, the film's protagonist remains in the background.

The next film I discuss is *A Woman in Berlin* that differs significantly in its approach to the events of the Second World War. *The Pianist* and *A Woman in Berlin* deal with similar issues: loss, trauma and the dehumanizing horrors of the war, as these are experienced by main characters. While we can view *The Pianist* as a stand-alone film, a representative of the "genre" of the "Holocaust film" without drawing parallels to its source text, *A Woman in Berlin*, in my opinion, cannot make the same claim.

3.2. The face and voice of "Anonymus": film adaptation of *A Woman in Berlin*

Anonyma – Eine Frau in Berlin (titled in English *A Woman in Berlin* but also *The Downfall of Berlin: Anonyma* in a version released in the United Kingdom) is a film on sensitive issues around the atrocities committed by the Soviet Red Army in Berlin at the end of the Second World War. Film is based on an anonymous diary titled *A Woman in Berlin. Diary 20 April 1945 to 22 June 1945* (in German: *Anonyma: Eine Frau in Berlin. Tagebuchaufzeichnungen vom 20. April bis 22. Juni 1945)*; the author of which was later identified as journalist Marta Hillers (1911–2001).[62] In the following discussion, I will use "Anonyma" to refer to the English (not the UK) edition of the diary (translated by Philip Boehm, introduction by Antony Beevor, afterword by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, published by Virago Press, 2006). I will discuss the screen adaptation mentioned above (directed by Max Färberböck, 2008) as "A Woman in Berlin" [AWiB]).[63]

The controversy surrounding the German edition of the diary has mostly involved the publication from 1959, however the German edition from 2003 (followed by reprints in English and other languages) fuelled new debates.

The focus of the book and film is on wartime violence and suffering of the civil population in Germany, particularly the mass rape of women and girls by Soviet soldiers in Berlin at the end of the war (in April-May 1945). The diary narrates the story from the perspective of a woman experiencing these events. The book caused public outrage when first made available to the German audience in 1950s. The subject of rape at that time was considered inappropriate for public discussion. Much of the controversy was likely provoked by the diarist who was frank in her storytelling and descriptions of what happened to her and others (considering the mindset of the society at the time of the original publication). Another aspect that was confronting for her readers in Germany was that she made no excuses for her decision to sell her body to the enemies in

[62] The title sequence of the film adaptation advises that: "Shocked by her contemporaries' disdain, the author banned any new editions for as long as she lived." *A Woman in Berlin – Eine Frau in Berlin.* 2008. (DVD 2009): [2:00:22]

[63] There are several book editions of the diary to consider in both German and English. Most discussions involving this diary refer to the original publication in German that was published in Switzerland and dated 1959. However, in the afterword to the English paperback edition from 2006 (by Virago Press), the German editor Hans Magnus Enzensberger has noted that this book was first published in 1953, after which it "disappeared from view" (Enzensberger 2006, 309). In the same paperback English edition, the foreword by English historian Antony Beevor reads: "This diary was first published anonymously in 1954 in an English translation in the United States and in Britain in 1955 by Secker & Warburg. A German language edition followed five years later in Geneva and was highly controversial in Germany" (Beevor 2006, 3). In my analysis I use the English translation of the 2003 German edition, "which was slightly revised by the author" (as is stated on the copyright page in *A Woman in Berlin. Diary 20 April 1945 to 22 June 1945.* Virago Press, 2006.)

exchange for food and protection – she presented this as a necessity to survive. Perhaps the complexity lies in that the diary is not solely a story of suffering, but also one of a conscious choice to collaborate with the perpetrators. During a time when the German public was only slowly starting to overcome the painful past, the diary was first met with such negative reactions from the public that the author chose not to re-publish it. In rest of Europe the diary was successful, so first publications in English were quickly followed by translations into several other European languages.

The story of re-publication and reception of the diary in 2003 (in Germany, followed by an English edition in 2004) is also interestingly related to how the public responded to the film adaptation in 2008. After her death, the identity of the anonymous author[64] was made public and the discussions of the book were revived. This provided some fertile ground for Max Färberböck's film adaptation of the diary. I will specify some of the issues around the reactions to the film adaptation below (from the perspective of an international, English-speaking reader and viewer).

In the following chapters, I will discuss both the diary and its film adaptation, paying close attention to the "face and voice" of an anonymous diarist and how she is portrayed on screen. I will also discuss the public reception of the diary and the film, as it is my intention to demonstrate that, artistic value not-withstanding, *A Woman in Berlin* as a film has value in our cultural memory particularly because it is *an adaptation* of a non-fictional autobiographical narrative.

As the Second World War was coming to an end, the Soviet Red Army forces reached Berlin. For the civilian population living in Berlin, these last days of war meant continued suffering. The negative attitudes towards German nationals at the end of the war meant that civilian lives in Germany were under constant threat (also demonstrated by the aerial destruction of civilian sites in German cities by the Western Allied Forces). The numbers of how many died during the air raids or under the Red Army advance vary greatly by source. This includes speculations over the potential number of victims that suffered violations like rape.

It is not this topic alone that warrants investigation or is of interest about the story of Anonyma, but also the fact that she chose to tell her story at all, that it was published, and how it was received by the public.

[64] Hereafter I will use "Anonyma" as a name to refer to the anonymous author and narrator in the diary, as well as to the voice-over narrator and character in the film adaptation.

3.2.1. Anonyma: the diarist and the story

The anonymous diary begins with the date 20th of April 1945. It captures the last events in the war in Europe that include the Battle of Berlin (16th of April and 2nd of May 1945). A short period of time is recorded in the diary only, as the story ends on 22nd of June 1945.

Most of her time, as described by the narrator in the diary, is spent looking for food and hiding either in her apartment or in the cellar of the building together with her neighbors, most of whom are women and children. In a sense, it is a story of every(wo)man in the destroyed city, an account of distancing away from normality and arguably humanity:

> One more thing. An image from the street: a man pushing a wheelbarrow with a dead woman on top, stiff as a board. Loose grey strands of hair fluttering, a blue kitchen apron. Her withered legs in grey stockings sticking out the end of the wheelbarrow. Hardly anyone gave her a second glance. Just like when they used to ignore the rubbish being hauled away. (Anonyma, 63)

Anonyma often compares people around her (and herself as well) to animals whose only concern is physical survival and finding food. From start to the final entries of the diary, she often describes her efforts to seek nourishment in order to survive: "My sole concern as I write these lines is my stomach. All thinking and feeling, all wishes and hopes begin with food" (Anonyma, 19). Towards the end of the diary Anonyma writes:

> God knows what we'll all end up eating. I think I'm far from any life-threatening extreme, but I don't really know how far. I only know that I want to survive – against all sense and reason, just like an animal. (Anonyma, 308)

Besides the honest descriptions of her circumstances, we learn very little of the author of the diary. As a character, she describes her physical appearance as a slender woman with blond hair. She is very proud of her cosmopolitan education, she is a well-travelled, independent woman. Her "man" – named Gerd – is fighting on the Eastern front. One reason for keeping the diary is her wish to share her experiences with her lover, whose fate is unknown to her:

> I'm writing. It does me good, takes my mind off things. And Gerd needs to read this if he comes back – if he's still – no, cross that out, I mustn't jinx things. (Anonyma, 28)

The published diary has almost a novel-like flow: there is brief tension leading to the first acts of conflict, then the rise of a heroine with obvious agency; to Anonyma questioning her identity, her own values and those of the society in which she lives in. By ending of the story with the long-awaited return of the

heroine's lover, she presents the reader with no real resolution to the story arc. The narrator depicts the fall of Berlin and her own personal experiences in a straightforward manner, without pathos, and without holding back on her own opinions and emotional reactions.

The first part of the diary renders a sense of loss of normality that Anonyma must deal with. First a distraught man, a baker, tells her that the soldiers have taken his wife. Anonyma cannot comprehend the reality of what is happening when she hears this news:

> For a second I feel I'm acting in a play. A middle-class baker can't possibly move like that, can't speak with such emotion, put so much feeling into his voice, bare his soul that way, his heart so torn. I've never seen anyone by great actors do that. (Anonyma, 71)

She expresses her disbelief in the man's emotional reaction, but also, Anonyma cannot believe that she finds *herself* in this situation or that it is at all possible. That the last days of war in Berlin were something out of the frame of previous reference for the citizens, reverberates through these diary entries quoted above. The fact that ordinary people who had not participated in nor provoked violence had to suffer through it, seemed outside the realm of possibilities for them.

At first Anonyma presents herself as someone eager to help her fellow citizens, especially because she understands a little Russian. However, despite her ability to communicate with the Soviet soldiers plundering the city, and even though she managed to save her neighbor from rape, Anonyma herself is attacked and raped by two Soviet soldiers while her neighbors abandon her: "I scream and scream… I hear the basement door shutting with a dull thud behind me" (Anonyma, 72). This trauma is something that she initially cannot write about – her diary entry is dated a day after the rape. She refers to this day (April 27th) as the day of "catastrophe", a day when her worldview was irrevocably changed. Consequently, Anonyma needs to accept the reality of what has happened to her, however difficult she finds that this now *is* her reality:

> Even now as I'm writing this I can still feel that sense of rising up and floating. Of course, it's just a fantasy, a pipe dream, a means of escape – my true self simply leaving my body behind, my poor, besmirched, abused body. Breaking away and floating off, unblemished, into a white beyond. It can't be me that this is happening to, so I'm expelling it all from me. (Anonyma, 81)

Writing, it seems, enables her to pour out her experiences on paper and to concentrate on something other than the constant threats and fight for survival. It offers an opportunity to both record what happened, but also to explain her own actions. As the following diary entries describe a situation where there is no help, nowhere to hide, still she struggles to somehow take control of what is happening to her: "What does it mean – rape?", she asks herself,

> When I said the word for the first time aloud, Friday evening in the basement, it sent shivers down my spine. Now I can think it and write it with an untrembling hand, say it out loud to get used to hearing it said. It sounds like the absolute worst, the end of everything – but it's not. (Anonyma, 83)

After suffering the violence and degradation from the latest attack, she avows to help herself:

> Damn this to hell! I say it out loud. Then I make up my mind. No question about it: I have to find a single wolf to keep away the pack. An officer, as high-ranking as possible, a commandant, a general, whatever I can manage. After all, what are my brains for, my little knowledge of the enemy language? (Anonyma, 85)

As she chooses to take action, it is thus not only the fear of violence but the need to survive best in the circumstances that motivates her. At last she finds a Russian officer, a lieutenant named Anatol, who provides her and her neighbors with food. However, when he unexpectedly leaves, she is faced with the fact that she needs to find *another* officer to protect and feed her. Finding a "protector" is a pragmatic action due to the lack of choice, she is using whatever agency she has left. Anonyma writes: "Physically I feel little better, though, now that I am doing something, planning something, determined to be more than mere mute booty, a spoil of war." (Ibid.).

On the one hand, she knows and accepts what is happening and what she can and must do to help herself. On the other hand, she obviously suffers from self-loathing, worsened by the contempt she receives from others. Her rapists and "protectors", the other women who are not "lucky" to receive food and other items as payment for sex, and especially the few German men, seem to be against her. Even Gerd, returing from war and having read her diary, refuses to accept what she felt she had to do.

On the last pages of the diary Anonyma describes how her life goes on despite what happened. She tries to find work as a journalist or in a related field, and actually succeeds in contributing to a newsletter titled "Die neue Tat" [The New Deed]. Her work – which she describes as fun – takes her to Charlottenburg, far from her place of residence. Even as she realizes that life must continue, she still struggles, feeling as if she operates on an auto pilot: "I trudge along, as always the automatic walking machine." (Anonyma, 284; see also 280; 297)

It is as if the terror and trauma she suffered as well as her own actions to survive led to her inability to emotionally process the return of peace and relative "normality" of life in the immediate aftermath of the war. This conclusion is emphasized by the narrative style: towards the end of the book, Anonyma's writings become less descriptive and more contemplative. She becomes wearier as she is counting her rations, always looking for food. The last diary entries too revolve mostly around food, assessing how much she has left and celebrating her luck when she finds more. However, this is written without the emotional engagement of her earlier diary entries. As her story

progresses, the writing becomes more factual, almost an afterthought, as if she has simply become numb to the reality that surrounds her, to that which has become her nation's loss:

> And so the balance is maintained: well-fed nations wallow in neurosis and excesses, while people plagued with suffering, as we are now, may rely on numbness and apathy to help see them through – if not for that I'd be weeping morning, noon and night. But I'm not crying and neither is anyone else, and the fact that we aren't is all part of a natural law. (Anonyma, 205)

3.2.1.1. Reception and rejection of Anonyma's story

As a narrator, Anonyma often chooses self-irony (for example, when she discusses whether she should "start calling herself a whore" and what exactly that means for her self-image) (see p. 141 in *Anonyma*). She also uses sarcasm to describe how people around her react to her "situation": she is both alone and at the same time, she shares a similar fate with so many other women in Berlin. In these diary entries, she is outright contemptuos of how others at first ignore what has happened to her and then look down on her subsequent choices. Whilst by finding a "protector", she feels that she is "better off" than most other women. Yet, she is aware of the implications her actions will have on her future. At the same time, she includes in her diary entries descriptions of the city around her in comparison to the time before the war, and here, especially when she addresses her audience directly (perhaps this is directed at her fiancé Gerd), her narration has contemplative, almost a lyrical quality.

The "polished writing style" of the diary, however, has created some doubts about the authenticity of the book. Whereas one reason might have been the anonymity of the author, Antony Beevor points especially to the quality of writing, the "literary merit" of the diary, as one reason for the (unwarranted) doubts about its authenticity. In his introduction to the English edition of the diary published in 2005, Beevor refutes any concerns that the diary is a fabrication:

> It was perhaps inevitable that doubts would be raised about this book, especially after the scandal over the fake Hitler Diaries. And the great bestseller of the 1950s, *Last Letters from Stalingrad*, was found to be fictitious over forty years after its first appearance. […] Yet any suspicions I felt obliged to raise about *A Woman in Berlin* were soon discarded. The truth lay in the mass of closely observed detail. The then anonymous diarist possessed an eye which was so consistent and original that even the most imaginative novelist would never have been able to reproduce her vision of events. Just as importantly, other accounts, both written and oral, which I accumulated during my own research into the events in Berlin, certainly seemed to indicate that there were no false notes. Of course, it is possible that some rewriting took place after the event, but that is true of almost every published diary. (Beevor 2006, 4–5)

However, once the doubts about authenticity have been raised, it is difficult to lay them to rest. Jennifer Redmann, for example, discusses the similarities between the reactions to the story of Anonyma and Anne Frank's diary. In "*Eine Frau in Berlin:* Diary as History or Fiction of the Self?" (2008), Redmann focuses on the authorship of the diary and the discussions in the German media after the author of Anonyma's diary was revealed to be journalist Marta Hillers. Redmann offers a detailed overview of the public debate concerning the diary (complemented by a thematic discussion of language and the identity of the narration). She also highlights an important issue linked to the reading of this book as a diary and a historical narrative, considering how the "literariness" of the diary provokes doubts about its authenticity:

> Clearly, this controversy will not be laid to rest until a critical edition of *Eine Frau in Berlin* is published; until then, we cannot know for certain the status of the published diary as a historical document. (Redmann 2008, 200)

Perhaps some of the issues around authenticity can be attributed to the style of narration, as Redmann and Beevor suggest. I would like to add that the subject matter itself was sensitive, both at the time of original publication and, albeit for somewhat different reasons, after the turn of the century. In the introduction to *A Woman in Berlin*, Antony Beevor writes that on both sides of post-war Germany, "[r]ape and sexual collaboration were taboo subjects in that post-war period, when men firmly reasserted their authority" (Beevor 2006, 3). Others have also viewed this diary as an example of one female author's attempt to depict and stand against not only the subjugation of women during the war, but also to the fact that, in a male-dominated society, their voices were not heard. [65]

However, some readers may have doubted the diary as a source of singular "truth" simply because of how Anonyma handles her trauma. Anonyma's story is not really a story of a rape victim – it is a story of surviving the war, part of which, for her as for numerous other women, was also the survival of rape. One

[65] See for example the above-mentioned discussion by Redmann, as well as Elisabeth Krimmer's article "Philomela's Legacy: Rape, the Second World War, and the Ethics of Reading" *(*in: *The German Quarterly* 88.1, 2015*).* The latter offers an interesting perspective on what the author calls a "flood" of publications "that highlight the victimization of Germans in the wake of the Second World War" (Krimmer 2015, 82), and the issues when reading these accounts as historical documents. "And yet," she concludes, "if we are to understand the repercussions of war, then it is vital that every form of wartime victimization enter the official record and form part of our concepts and imaginations of war. […] Clearly, there is a legacy of violence in both silence and in writing, but there is also an ethics of reading that allows one to pay tribute to the victims' suffering even as one negotiates and recontextualizes their stories." (Ibid., 98-99). From the perspective of judiciary discourse, Janet Halley, for example, reads Anonyma's story as-if a victim and a witness statement (in connection that rape as a war crime was not discussed in public for a long time, and was rejected by society). (Halley 2008)

can find accounts, often personal testimonies and autobiographical writings, of this wartime terror against the civil population all over the world. Anonyma's diary is both a war story, narrated from the perspective of a female civilian, but also a story of a personal and, furthermore, a national collapse of identity. She must overcome rape and degradation, as she describes in her diary, at least seemingly so. Still, the numbness Anonyma describes that she herself and others feel, is "a new reality" that her society at large must overcome to continue (see the quote above concluding sub-chapter 3.2.1).

According to the editor of the 2003 German publication of the diary Hans Magnus Enzensberger, when the original book was first published in 1959 in Germany, the readers "were obviously not ready to face some uncomfortable truths, and the book was met with hostility and silence" (Enzensberger 2006, 310). The reasons for this may be attributed to the tone of the book, as previously noted. It is a story of mass rape and of personal suffering, but also a story of survival and the pragmatic choices that have nothing to do with how society views morality. Anonyma was accused of "shamelessness" and "immorality", but as Enzensberger states, the accusations were as much about what the author talked *about* as *how* she addressed the issue:

> The author's attitude was an aggravating factor: devoid of self-pity, with a clear-eyed view of her compatriots' behaviour before and after the Nazi regime's collapse, everything she wrote flew in the face of the reigning post-war complacency and amnesia. (Enzensberger 2006, 310)

Depending on the point of view of the critic, the diary (and its film adaptation in 2008) are thought and emotion provoking insights into the consequences of war. There was, of course, research conducted and evidence collected on the suffering of German civilians during the decades following the war. On the other hand, the re-emergence of Anonyma's diary was made possible thanks to the changes in society and in the political situation.

Holger Pötzsch has in his article "Rearticulating the Experience of War in Anonyma: *Eine Frau in Berlin*" (2012) examined and aptly summarized the public reception of both the diary and its film adaptation in the context of sociocultural discourse. Pötzsch distinguishes between three important milestones in the German "public and historical discourse […] regarding the issue of mass rape in general and the diary of the Anonyma in particular". According to Pötzsch, the state-sponsored research in 1950s shed light on the losses and suffering of the civil population in Germany from the end of the war, although rape and violence committed by the Red Army was never discussed in public (this has been attributed to diplomatic relationships and Germany's placement as an emerging political power in the West). (Pötzsch 2012, 24–25)

The second phase that helped bring the subject to light, according to Pötzsch, lies in the changes in the political situation in the 1990s. Information on these events became increasingly accessible thanks to the fall of the Soviet Union and the unification of Germany. The third milestone for Pötzsch was the "rise of life

writing" connected to the Second World War, and here the importance of the diary was its account as a "distinctly female experience of war":

> In describing the strategies and practices through which females successfully transform a situation of complete lawlessness into a small scale economy based on the exchange of food and protection for sexual and other services, the Anonyma's diary places women civilians and the specific grievances, challenges, performances, and, indeed sacrifices, of this group in the front seat of a war narrative. In doing so, her report also challenges a hegemonic masculine discourse of war that reduces mass rape to an assault on the nation's male protectors and that narrowly frames successful female strategies of survival as morally weak, shameful, and inherently treacherous. The Anonyma voices a powerful challenge to this war discourse. Maybe, precisely here one of the reasons for the long-lasting silence surrounding her story can be found. (Pötzsch 2012, 24)

I agree with Pötzch's account that the republication of the diary in the beginning of the 21st century reflects the changes in political norms that had occurred, wherein it was possible to initiate discussions on what were previously considered taboo subjects. And, that this certainly also reflects changes in social conventions that, at least in part, regulate how women are positioned in Western societies today. These changes meant that the diary finally received the attention it deserved. However, even though Anonyma openly accuses the German (male) public of trying to suppress the suffering that women experienced, I do not share the view that her intention was to challenge social norms in her contemporary society (as Pötzsch does). Her story constitutes a female perspective on the war, but the "rape of Berlin" that she describes is much more than a rape of her physical body, it marks a loss of culture and society that she identified with. As much as her narrative is about her suffering, degradation and pain from having experienced rape, it is also – perhaps even more – about the hunger, disease and cold that she endured and difficult choices she made in order to survive.

3.2.2. *A Woman in Berlin:* a double-layered narration in film adaptation

Max Fäberböck's film adaptation of Anonyma's diary begins with a voice-over introduction: a woman speaking in German[66] tells the viewer that "The unthinkable had occurred… It was on April 26, 1945. The Russian army had encircled Berlin and was advancing on the Reichstag, street by street." The film cuts from a black screen to a blurry image of a destroyed street. This first shot from a high angle presents a female figure, carrying a suitcase, climbing over the debris of destroyed buildings on the streets. The voice-over continues: "You

[66] *Anonyma – Eine Frau in Berlin. 2008.* (DVD release 2009), after this referred to as *AWiB*. Hereafter I am using English subtitles as translated in the DVD version of the film.

could see the sun behind the clouds that day and the scent of lilacs wafted over from abandoned gardens." [*AWiB*, 0:00:35–0:01:00]

The viewers who have read the diary can immediately draw parallels between the two texts. On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the voice-over inserts are not adapted from the diary word-for-word. Still, it is the imaginative, contemplative, in part ironic and in part understated emotional language of the narrator that is recognizable. The above-mentioned quote from the diary, as adapted into film text, combines both visual imagery and voice-over narration, connecting the film to the following description from the diary, dated 20th of April 1945:

> Now and then whole hours pass in eerie silence. Then, all of a sudden, you remember that it's spring. Clouds of lilac perfume drift over from untended gardens and go wafting through the charred ruins of apartment houses. Outside the cinema, the acacia stump is foaming over with green. The gardeners must have snatched a few minutes between sirens to dig at their allotment plots, because there's freshly turned earth around the garden sheds up and down Berliner Strasse. (Anonyma, 17)

Over the course of the film, familiar images and references from the diary are repeated using voice-over narration. The voice of the narrator becomes part of the character on screen, but as she tells her story in past tense, this creates a gap between what the viewers see and what the described experience is. Here, the use of voice-over constitutes a dichotomy: Anonyma in her portrayal on screen often remains silent and expressionless without revealing much to the viewer, meaning that her voice-over commentary is necessary to understand the character in film.

As a subject for film studies, voice-over as part of film narration has either been overlooked, criticized as a "non-filmic"/" literary" tool or simply "an easy way out" to describe that what cannot (or should not) be shown on screen. In film adaptation, the use of voice-over can be either extensive or partial, it is often used to introduce and conclude the film, by adding explanatory commentary. In *A Woman in Berlin*, however, the voice of the narrator off-screen becomes a prominent part of the film. It forms a bridge to the source material and adds another layer of complexity revelant to character development and storyline. Films that do not rely on any other source material than the original script also make use of voice-over narration. Voice-over can present the thoughts of characters, and it can constitute an important part of narration that provides information that otherwise does not appear on screen – it has both functions in this film. In any case, the use of voice-over either has a purpose to *add* something to the story, or it is used to *emphasize* what is shown on screen. In *A Woman in Berlin*, the role of the voice-over narrator is crucial for both character and plot development.

"Where do I start?" asks the voice-over narrator. [*AWiB,* 0:01:05 and as follows]. "What are the right words? As a journalist I had travelled to 12

countries. I lived in Moscow, Paris, and London. I enjoyed living in Paris and London. But I came back. I wanted to be part of *it*." The image of the destroyed street in the first shots of the film becomes a background for the narration – nothing happens on screen besides images of smoke and dust. As the view is slowly clearing, the viewer sees laundry hanging from the windows of the apartments, slowly moving in the slight wind. As the narrator pauses, the screen fades to black and the next image is a close-up of a woman typing something about "Das Diktat von Versailles" being the cause of… (the remaining words are unreadable). (The reference to the treatment of Germany as a nation that lost the First World War and how subsequently the National Socialist German Workers' Party gained its overwhelming popularity in Germany, is made obvious.) As she types the article, the voice-over narrator continues: "My name doesn't matter. I was just one of many who believed in my country's destiny. Doubts…were for weaklings." Here the camera shows the inside of an apartment in which we see the back of a woman who sits behind a desk. The sound of a typewriter forms the background for a different narration, as a male voice says: "Warsaw, Brussels, Paris. A never-ending triumph. Russia lacks leadership". The camera cuts to a close-up of a man washing his hands at the sink, and as he rises, we see a woman standing at the door of what appears to be a bathroom. The man continues: "By the time they recover, we'll be in Moscow." The scene of him dressing and leaving, kissing the woman goodbye, is again accompanied by a female voice narrating: "The day Gerd left, his boots echoed through the house. We were convinced we were right. We all breathed the same air and it was intoxicating". The following scene appears to be another flashback of a group of people who celebrate, talking and laughing, and the same woman – we recognize her as the narrator – asks to give a moment of thanks to all their men, scattered across Europe, fighting in the war. As the guests take a moment of silence, the screen fades to black accompanied by a sudden sound of explosion and glass shattering. Through smoke and dust, we see a man in a German uniform who yells at someone to run. The following images show total chaos and destruction, with civilians running around and soldiers shooting on the street. Anonyma finds shelter in the basement together with many others. While she walks around, the direct POV shot (panning around in the dark basement, focusing on one person after another), is again accompanied by her voice-over narration: "I'll write it all down, Gerd, for you to read" [*AWiB*, 0:06:11]. The viewer is led to understand that here the voice-over represents the diary entries that Anonyma is writing with the intention for her loved one to read. As the movie progresses, the images on screen are often accompanied by her voice, commenting on what is shown or imparting her thoughts.

On the whole, the use of voice-over in *A Woman in Berlin* adds invaluable information about the narrator as a character, highlighting her past, her views and her thoughts. As in the opening sequence described above, this sets the events on screen in perspective. For example, Anonyma tells how "they both felt this intoxicating air" of their nation's success, but now, they all face the

same loss. This type of information is mostly told and not shown – a surprising choice in a film narrative. The voice-over commentaries also include practical information about places, dates and times, explaining the historical setting. The first half of the film depicts what the people who lived in Anonyma's building went through during the Battle of Berlin. At 1:15:21 in film, the radio message is played: "Residents of Berlin! On 30 April 1945, the Führer killed himself and betrayed all those who swore allegiance to him." – Anonyma comments, pictured writing in her diary: "Capitulation. At long last. The war is over! How we women longed for that. But now? A very bitter defeat. More and more people are talking about horrific things. I sense an eerie something in the air. Evil and menacing. I don't want to think about it now". [*AWiB*, 1:22:10–1:22:49]

As a non-diegetic sound, the voice-over narration stands out from the other constituent elements of the film. The spectator is concurrently expected to pay attention to both what is shown on screen and what is narrated off-screen. Other non-diegetic elements like film music fade mostly into the background. Max Fäberböck also uses the point-of-view shot in its various forms throughout the movie to establish that the perspective on what is happening at the time belongs mainly to the female lead character. For example, in the opening sequence of the film, Anonyma enters the basement where people are hiding. Here, we follow the camera as if through her eyes, accompanied by the narrator's voice introducing various characters. [*AWiB*, 0:04:50–0:06:45] The narrator both introduces the characters as if in the moment the camera (as Anonyma) passes them, while she tells her story in past tense. Thus, the viewer is left wondering: are these the inner thoughts or emotions of the character *presently* acting, or is the narrator looking back and commenting on the story told on screen, providing her perspective? In my interpretation, this feature has the purpose to convey that the story told on screen has already happened, narrated as remembered by the main character. This gap in narrative time is one example of a lack of correlation between the voice-over narration and what is shown on screen. Another layer in *A Woman in Berlin* is constituted by conflicting words and actions, by dialogue overlapped by the voice-over narration. Examples of this technique of film narration, as if a story in three layers, can be found throughout the film.

A key sequence of scenes connected by voice-over is when Anonyma realizes her feelings for her "protector", the Russian major [*AWiB*, 1:45:11 – until the film ends]. As Anonyma finds her neighbor crying over her dead husband (who has taken poison and killed himself), the off-screen narrator addresses "Gerd". This voice-over accompanies the actions and the dialogue, as Anonyma ushers the neighbor's young daughter out of the room, hands her over to another woman, and then rushes out of the building. In the voice-over, she asks Gerd, if he remembers that "it was a Tuesday." [*AWiB,* 1:45:19]. Momentarily, on screen, she tells the child: "Let's go see Felix" [*AWiB*, 1:45:21]. "We could smell the pine resin", she follows her story to Gerd. On screen she is still talking to the child, as she leaves the apartment, runs upstairs

and commands the woman who lost her husband to follow her. The quiet music that accompanies her narration steadily becomes louder as does Anonyma's own narrated voice – it drowns out the voices of other actors in the scene. Now, Anonyma is pictured rushing out of the building, the camera follows her cycling through the streets of Berlin – we are offered both several close-ups of her face as well as POV shots, in slow motion, as she regards the Soviet soldiers on the streets. The narrator continues – but it is unclear whether she is still addressing Gerd, as if writing in her diary, or whether this is her internal monologue as if in screen-time? Compare the following remarks: "I've had so many things in my life, an over-abundance. The major has lost everything. Damn Russian idealist! He sees himself the way he wants the world to be. A Soviet true believer!" she narrates. "But I like him. The less he wants from me, the more I like him. Very much." – the narrator pauses for a moment, as Anonyma on screen rushes to her building, looking for the major – "Andrei?" the narrator asks, and Anonyma's character on screen echoes this, calling out to him as well [*AWiB,* 1:46:42–1:47:05].

In *A Woman in Berlin*, the voice-over narration provides insight into inner conflicts that Anonyma experiences that otherwise would not be apparent for the spectator. As she witnesses the despair of a woman whose husband could not tolerate the humiliation that his wife had suffered and subsequently took his own life, Anonyma herself has been steadily moving towards having deeper feelings for her protector, the major Andrei (played by Evgeniy Sidikhin). Through narration she tries to offer "Gerd" some explanation for her feelings. But as she searches for Andrei, she learns that he has left and instead, Gerd (played by August Diehl) has returned from the battle [*AWiB*, 1:47:17]. The narrated text here "catches up" to real time Anonyma who hands her diary over to Gerd when upset by his silent accusations: "Here, this is for you" [*AWiB,* 1:51:11]. The following scenes picture Anonyma trying to find Andrei, their final meeting, and her consecutive return to Gerd. "Two days later, he was gone," says the narrator. Anonyma's narration in film re-appears, as we follow her character walking down the streets, carrying two buckets of water, being watched by Soviet soldiers lined up on both sides of the street. "I don't know if he'll be back." (she tells) "I'm surprised it doesn't hurt more. But I have so much to do! I have to find a flintstone. Mop up the puddles in the studio and scavenge for greens. I found some lilacs yesterday. Does Gerd ever think of me? Who knows… Maybe his heart will speak again and I'll see him… [the screen fades to black]… Sometime… [*AWiB*, 1:59:31–2:00:11]. Here the film concludes with the title sequence that tells the story of how Anonyma's diary was published and the response it received from the public.

3.2.3 A Woman in Berlin – adaptation, (in)fidelity and issues of reception

Max Fäberböck's film adaptation is partially a war film, a story of actions of war and their consequences. It is also a story of loss, both of identity and of loss of agency. In this I find that the film adaptation very closely matches the diary. Overwhelmingly, however, the film is a love story, although an unhappy one. At first, we follow Anonyma as she waits for Gerd to return. Then her feelings grow towards Andrei, but when she finally admits to these, she loses both Gerd and Andrei. One might conclude from how the film ends that she will continue, as she must – and because Anonyma in her diary has described her resolution to go on. The feelings of loss and helplessness echo in her final words on screen (as quoted above). In the diary, Anonyma also stands out as a strong character, but what is lacking is the love story: Anonyma feels conflicted over her own lack of hatred towards her "Major". ("Andrei" is in fact another character in the diary, a polite, blue-eyed sergeant, a teacher whom Anonyma engages in political debates – Major is named after his rank. His character is introduced later in the diary, when Anonyma has already experienced several rapes, and found and lost one or two potential "protectors" (a sergeant, a lieutenant). Therefore she is very glad to finally find as high ranking a protector as a major, although she is careful not to mention his name (see p. 121; 127 in Anonyma). In the diary, the character of Major is just another officer Anonyma approaches when she tries to find protection from common soldiers. When they meet, she is simply glad to find that he is not "bestial" like other soldiers. The film, however, introduces the "Major"/Andrei's character almost immediately – as Anonyma hides in her building, we see how the Soviet troops enter that part of Berlin. The Major/Andrei is shot and his injury partially leads to his meeting with Anonyma.

Partially, the film also quotes the diarist: "But I like him. The less he wants from me, the more I like him. Very much" (as quoted in the film, see above). Anonyma in film tells that she likes Andrei "very much", in comparison, the diary paints a different picture:

> Am I doing it because I like him, or out of a need for love? God forbid! For the moment I've had it up to here with men and their male desire. I can't imagine ever longing for any of that again. Am I doing it for bacon, butter, sugar, candles, canned meat? To some extent I'm sure I am. […] In addition, I like the major, and the less he wants from me as a man, the more I like him as a person. And he won't be wanting much, I can tell. […] For out of all the male beasts I've seen these past few days, he's the most bearable, the best of the lot. Moreover, I can actually control him […] (Anonyma, 140)

Thus, the key scene described above wherein confilicted Anonyma rushes to Andrei (and instead, finds Gerd), can also be interpreted from the diary. The emotions in film mirror the diary entries (on pages 170–171). Still, whilst the film interprets the inner conflict of Anonyma as a love story, the diary could

simply be read as an overload of emotions in a difficult situation in which she finds some kind of temporary relief and happiness, yet feels guilt and self-loathing because of this:

> I'm sun-drunk and exhilarated from riding fast. I feel more cheerful than I have in weeks, practically elated. On top of that the major has brought some Tokay wine. We drink it; I feel good, cosy as a cat. The major stayed till 5p.m.; after he left I felt rotten. I cried.
>
> [Weeks later, scribbled in the margin, to be used by novelists: For three heartbeats her body became one with the unfamiliar body on top of her. Her nails dug into the stranger's hair, she heard the cries coming from her own throat and the stranger's voice whispering words she couldn't understand. Fifteen minutes later she was all alone. […] Suddenly she felt, with uncanny precision, a different hand burrowing into her hair, the hand of her lover, perhaps long dead. She felt something swelling, churning, erupting inside her. […] She howled into the pillow and wanted to die.] (Anonyma, 170–171)

The film adaptation interprets Anonyma's conflicted feelings in ways that the diarist does not. She tells that these margins are scribbled "for novelists" – the feelings conveyed here may belong to her, but she does not accept them, thus indicating that this is in fact *fiction*, not reality. Here, the perceived unreality of the situation that the diarist finds herself in returns in full force (just as she expressed her disbelief towards the baker whose wife was attacked and who was grieving in a manner that Anonyma found theatrical[67]). Looking back "several weeks later", the diarist reveals a distance between herself and "she", the woman whose feelings are described in the quote above, with these notes separated from the rest of the diary by brackets. What are the true feelings of Anonyma, the diarist and the author? Clearly, this quote is evidence of self-reflection, whilst it creates distance between the character and the author.[68] As a published and, most importantly, edited diary, Anonyma's narrative cannot offer the same "immediacy" as a personal story that was never meant to be read. In the quote discussed here, the diarist clearly invites "novelists" to notice her conflicting feelings and create a fictional story based on her experiences. And here, Max Fäberböck succeeds in doing exactly that. In the film, the voice-over narration often quotes the diary, but adds to it a layer of storytelling that does not match the source material.

In my interpretation, the conflict that Anonyma is portrayed going through in the film has rather a melodramatic effect. It may be intended to show how a

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[67] See page 71 in diary (and discussed in sub-chapter 3.2.1 in this thesis).

[68] The diary as a genre has been viewed as a […] '"failed" autobiography, because it lacks a stable, rational sense of self, a progressive narrative, or a secure appeal to a (public) audience […], as Trev Lynn Broughton in the introduction to a collection of essays *Auto-biography* observes. (Broughton 2007, 37) This quote refers to an essay published in the same volume, wherein Felicity A. Nussbaum notes that the diary is "simultaneously preserving and evaluating" the events. (Nussbaum 2007, 10)

person suffering through violence can misinterpret her feelings towards someone who offers her kindness.

In film, the narrator considers Russian soldiers as both her attackers and her protectors: "What do I think about them? Sometimes I feel I could put up with anything. As long as it comes from without and doesn't ambush me from within my heart. I'm doing fine. And my Russian is getting better." [*AWiB*: 0:48:48–0:49:16] But from the moment Andrei is introduced in film, he stands out amongst the common soldiers. He is distinguished by his obviously cultured manners, an immaculate uniform, and because he expresses contempt for violence. However, the developing love story between Anonyma and Andrei in film is even more remarkable, considering how "the Major" is described in the diary – it is hard to see him as Anonyma's "romantic interest" – he is described as the unworthy conqueror, the incomprehensible invader:

> He's upstanding, frank and clean. But he's also distant and alien and so unfinished. Whereas we Westerners are old and experienced and tremendously clever – and now no more than dirt beneath their boots. (Anonyma, 143)

Indeed, the dual nature of this film is manifested in its reception *as an adaptation.* From cultural, social and political points of view, the publication of this anonymous diary was a critically important event. The reception of the film has greatly been based on that effect. Without the discussions and debates, the knowledge that the viewer might have received from this film would have simply been, as follows: "the bestial Russian soldiers attacked the citizens in Berlin, but not all of the soldiers were beasts, and not all of the victims innocent. A German woman loses her belief in Nazi ideology and finds love amongst her enemies." As over-simplified as this summary may seem, it echoes the sentiments of many reviewers who watched the film. For example, Peter Brunette after seeing the film at the Toronto Film Festival summarised it with the word "empty". He elaborated:

> Alas, during the process of adaptation, somehow the film script seems to have gotten overwhelmed by the rich plethora of material. […] Otherwise it's rape, rape, and more rape, followed by an accommodation between the opposing groups that allowed, basically, for selective raping (in other words, "protectors") in exchange for consumer goodies. […] Neither the basic dramatic situations nor the chief characters are ever clearly delineated, leaving the viewer with a strong sense that something important is always being left out. […] When Gerd, the anonymous author's husband, finally returns home, he's disgusted when he reads the diaries that have been addressed to him by his collaborating wife. We who have shared these women's impossibly compromised lives are supposed to feel otherwise, it seems, but unfortunately the badly written script won't permit that. (Brunette 2008)

The "emptiness" – or what is "left out" – may be the character development witnessed in the diary, as Anonyma first mocks and rages against her situation, and finally finds a way to move forward. Certainly, from the above review one could conclude that the overall grotesqueness of the situation women faced in Berlin – cooperate and likely be rewarded with food, or be assaulted anyway – has reached the film narrative.

The film's subject matter may indeed be one reason why it received such mixed reviews. For example, Kenneth Turan (LA Times, 7th of August 2009) calls it "the best movie you're not going to see this year. You're going to read this review, maybe some others, you'll say, 'That sounds good,' but you won't go because the subject matter is difficult to handle." (Turan 2009) In his review, Turan reflects on the context and issues around the publication and reception of the film. For this reviewer, the inclusion of the romantic involvement between Anonyma and the major is not exactly a love story:

> It becomes more real than either party intends, but it would be a mistake to give it a name that means something only in a peacetime context. Built on an incendiary combination of power, attraction and deprivation, it is a relationship that could happen only during the particular kind of saturnalia that the chaos of war breeds. (Ibid.)

Stewart (2009) in his review felt the "emptiness" of the film especially strongly and criticised the film's lack of willingness to delve deeper into the psyche of Germans, as they accepted the loss of war. He also believed that there was reluctance to explore the subjugation of Germans depicted in film. Considering the film conformist, this reviewer noted that:

> *A Woman in Berlin* shares something in common with its main character: anonymity. Unlike the forceful, unwavering *Downfall*, which dared to view Berlin's final collapse into an inferno of medievalist savagery exclusively through guilty German eyes, this is a film with diplomacy and even-handedness constantly on the brain as it divides and dilutes its viewpoint among a host of historically identifiable constituencies: Regretful and dead-ender Germans, restrained and plunderous Russians, and cultural outsiders like a Mongolian-Soviet infantryman and a Silesian refugee on the German side are all foregrounded just long enough to have their stories presented in the tidy dimensions of a made-for-television film. (Stewart 2009)

In review by Stewart, the expectations for a historical film are present, as the past is expected to be presented in a relatable way. And the reviewer is disappointed as it is perceived that *A Woman in Berlin* falls into the trap of "diplomacy" – very surprising, considering the subject matter. Other reviewers seem to have formed a different impression of the film. *The Guardian* (International edition), for example, praises the diary and film for having "a cathartic effect in Germany, allowing many women and their relatives to start talking openly about the hidden horror of those months in 1945. This is one film that,

for a whole generation, is most definitely not just a movie." (Connolly 2009) This comment is not about the film, but the reception of the diary's re-publication. Here, in my opinion, the diary as a "pre-sold title" gains full effect: it is not how the story is told, not the additions nor omissions made in the film adaptation that are important, but rather the story itself. The reviewer, however, credits the director, Max Fäberböck, for his decision to direct the movie:

> Färberböck says the reason he wanted to make Anonyma was "the extra-ordinary courage of its author to speak about things that nobody wanted to know. I found her completely infectious, even though I knew that there'd be a huge hue and cry when the film opened." (Ibid.)

In addition, this review in *The Guardian* is one of the very few reviews or discussions of film that examines Nina Hoss's portrayal of the main character. Although, when comparing this review to the previous example, then Nina Hoss' own explanation of her approach to Anonyma's character echoes "the diplomacy and even-handedness" mentioned above:

> Hoss is aware of the ambiguity of a character who was both a victim of the Russians and a convinced Nazi. "I had to ask myself, why did this young, educated, well-travelled German adopt the ideology of the National Socialists?" she says. "I could not portray her simply as an innocent victim. On the other hand she is impressive – amid all the horror she finds the strength to reflect on who the Russians are and why they are doing this to her. It requires a lot of strength and honesty to be able to think five minutes after a rape that it is revenge for what the Germans did in Russia." (Ibid.)

This interpretation of Anonyma's character does not align with the information in the diary. Indeed, Anonyma often wonders if "their men" could have been capable of inflicting the same horrors. However, she also clearly views the Soviet soldiers as "more inclined to follow their animal instincts", as she compares them to the barbarians invading Rome. (Anonyma, 99) Both the diary and film do try to substantiate the violence. One example is of a young man, who when accused of rape forces Anonyma to translate for him, in vivid detail, about how the German troops killed all the children in his village (Anonyma, 71). The violations that Soviet soldiers commit are therefore part of their revenge. The inevitable question that characters in film then ask themselves is: could this be something that their men, their loved ones are also capable of? The above-mentioned story of German forces killing children is something that both Anonyma and other women are unable to believe, they tell themselves – surely it must have been the SS, not "their men".

> I don't believe it, answers Frau Lehmann. 'Our soldiers? My husband? Never!' Fräulein Behn tells me to ask the Russian whether the soldiers in question had 'a bird here' (on their caps) or 'a bird there' (on their arms) – in other words, whether they were Wehrmacht or SS. […] Talk like this is

> already making the rounds; today at the pump I heard several people say, 'Our boys probably weren't much different over there.' (Anonyma, 159)

Despite the evidence, Anonyma and other women are unable to believe that the men they know and love *could* be capable of the same atrocities.

These reviews mirror how the film was marketed to international audiences – that is, taking care not to provide any real commentary on Anonyma's political beliefs. The film itself treads carefully on this topic and tries to find middle ground. Thus, a question is warranted: as the diary prompts a discussion of issues that for long have remained a taboo, then does the film adaptation add or retract from this central premise?

3.2.4. Chapter conclusion

A Woman in Berlin has multiple layers of meaning and impact both as a film adaptation, in its narrative form, and in terms of the subject matter of the diary. At first glance, the diary serves the purpose of narrating the untellable in its approach to social and political taboos. Anonyma shares her story that is indeed a unique and a very personal perspective on war and its crimes, but with disastrous results (as we learn from reading the diary and in its reception of the published version). In the film, the controversial reaction that the publication of the diary first faced is both mirrored in Gerd's reaction to reading Anonyma's diary, and in the information provided in the title sequence. Therefore, by including these references, the film emphasizes the context of its source material. It does so by referring directly to the diary by including voice-over narration. The voice of the narrator becomes part of the character on screen, but as she tells her story in past tense, there is a gap between what we see and what the voice-over narrator tells us. Nina Hoss in her portrayal of Anonyma on screen often remains silent and expressionsless without revealing much to the viewer, meaning that voice-over commentary is necessary to understand the character in film. This adds contrasts and an interesting extra dimension to actress' performance. At the same time, Anonyma's character and story is somewhat changed, and in some opinion, also weakened in the film adaptation (as can be interpreted from the film reviews discussed above). The diarist – a persona we meet on the pages of the diary – remains anonymous as we learn very little about her life outside of what is described on the pages of the book. Although it is partially the diary format itself that dictates her narrative, the events that she experiences remain central. The portrayal of a previously faceless woman who could be *any* woman in Berlin in 1945 – is unique in film. However, the film adaptation deals with the complex issue of portraying an *anonymous* character. Even though the author of the source text was identified at the time of film production, the film raises some ethical questions about how to portray an individual who wishes to remain anonymous. Lacking biographical information in the anonymous diary, the film adds an interesting

twist to Anonyma's story – the anonymous "voice" is identified as that of a character played by Nina Hoss. The construction of this character is based on brief descriptions in the diary – that Anonyma is well educated and well-travelled, speaks several languages, has blond hair and a slender body – but without many recognizable images of author Marta Hillers herself, the image presented in the movie *becomes* that of a real-life individual. Her identity is shaped as a multi-faceted character through combined voice-over narration and performance of the actress. Despite (or perhaps thanks to) the fact that the narrator in the diary remains intentionally anonymous (she tells very little about herself), it is possible to view her story in the greater context of the Rape of Berlin: it is her story, but also a collective memory. Here, in the process of individualization, the story on film screen becomes that of *Anonyma*, an identifiable individual instead of that of everywoman in Berlin in 1945.

Holger Pötzsch, for example, has summarized the impacts of the film as adaptation in relation to the diary, as follows:

> […] the screen adaptation carried with it an increased fictionalization and inevitable embellishment of the shattering original account. In crossing the boundary between an allegedly factual document and partly fictitious reenactment, the narrative also exchanges the immediate day-to-day perspective of a directly involved witness with the long-term retrospective perspective of a commentator with the ability to oversee the whole historical period as well as the history of the reception of the earlier publications. This way, the invented facts and "metaphorical truths" (Rosenstone 2006, 8) of Färberböck's adaptation impact historical discourse and public commemoration of the period in a different, and no less efficient, way than the preceding written publications. (Pötzsch 2012, 17)

In my view, the film functions "in public commemoration" at the same level as the impact of the original story, only when *compared and contrasted* with the source material. Whilst the voice-over narration does add a retrospective aspect to the narration, in my opinion the film does not offer true contextual commentary (that one would expect from an historical film). The changes in social norms and the political climate are also mirrored in the production and reception of the film adaptation of Anonyma's diary. While not surprising that *Anonyma – Eine Frau in Berlin (2008)* received much international attention, it is interesting that its reception was in equal measures focused on the authenticity of the source material and context, as much as on the film text. *Anonyma – Eine Frau in Berlin,* therefore has found its place in the acultural discourse not only as historical film, but as *an adaptation*.

When comparing the diary of Anonyma's to the memoir of W. Szpilman, certain thematic similarities and characteristics in narration are evident. Both stories tell us about a collapse of a society, about the loss of its pre-determined social and cultural norms. In a way, both narratives deal with the "death of a city" in the meaning that order, civilized culture and behavior have disappeared. The fear of death, the reality of living in constant terror permeates both

narratives to a great deal. Both narrators find themselves in a situation they cannot comprehend, as it is so far from their normal frame of reference. In terms of their stories, W. Szpilman has covered several years of events in his memoir from the perspective of long after the events had happened. Anonyma's story is a diary that grabs readers' interest with its immediacy. As we read, we are aware that Szpilman survived the war and we are "looking back" at the events together with the narrator even without reading any background material (for example, the introduction by A. Beevor). However, Anonyma's person and her fate remain uncertain from reading her diary. Still, both stories tell about historical events in a way that, by contributing to contemporary cultural discourse, have influenced how history is understood.

The next example of a historical-biographical film I will explore also deals with a controversial subject matter, but it greatly differs from previous examples. Jan Troell's *Hamsun* (1996) is not an adaptation of an autobiographical work, but that of a biographical novel. My reasoning for including this "case" of adaptation is firstly to explore and contrast a case with a different source-adaptation path than what *The Pianist* and *A Woman in Berlin* exemplify; and secondly, to demonstrate that the same issues apply to the portrayals of biographical characters in staying "true to the story". *The Pianist* aims to offer a historically accurate portrayal. *A Woman in Berlin* gives a "face" to a (previously) anonymous "voice". The character of Knut Hamsun in the film by Jan Troell is more complex, and here several parallels can be drawn to historical-biographical facts, various documentary and literary sources.

3.3. The case of "Hamsun"

3.3.1. Filling the gaps: *On Overgrown Paths* and *Processen mod Hamsun*

On Overgrown Paths (*Paa gjengrodde stier*) is the last novel by the Norwegian modernist author Knut Hamsun (1859–1952). It was first published in 1949 (in Norwegian and Swedish[69]) when the author was already 90 years of age. Throughout his very long career, Hamsun published over 40 books, including novels, short stories, poetry and plays. He received the Nobel Prize in literature for his neo-realist novel *Growth of the Soil* (1917) in 1920. This novel, as most of Hamsun's better-known works, had by the Second World War been translated into several European languages. Therefore, Knut Hamsun as a literary figure was well known outside of Scandinavia and his name held great symbolic weight especially in the German and the French-speaking cultural circles. By the time his last novel was published, Hamsun had more than 70 active literary and cultural years behind him, and particularly in Norway and

[69] Original title: Hamsun, Knut. *På igenvuxna stigar / översättning från författarens manuskript av Einar Thermænius*. Stockholm: Bonnier, 1949.

Scandinavia his name carried a certain nimbus of greatness. Hamsun had retired from literary career by declaring himself finished with active writing at the age of 77, after the publication of his novel *The Ring is Closed* (1936, *Ringen sluttet*), which is 13 years before *On Overgrown Paths* was published. Still, Hamsun remained a prominent figure in the Norwegian, but also in the wider Scandinavian cultural arena. Thus, the emergence of another novel by Hamsun was astonishing and met with much excitement – not all (nor even most) of which, however, can be ascribed to literary interest.

Despite that today Hamsun's last novel is praised for its literary merit and characterized as "first and foremost a treasure trove of vibrant impressions of nature and the seasons"[70], and as a novel that "miraculously recalls the spirit of Hamsun's early novels, with their reverence for nature, absurdist humor, and quirky flights of fancy"[71]; when *On Overgrown Paths* was first published it received some mixed reviews. Before and during the war, Hamsun had very publicly supported the Nazi Germany and its Norwegian collaborators. Famously, he gifted his Nobel prize medal to Joseph Goebbels, and often expressed his admiration for Adolf Hitler's person and ideology. Hamsun deceptively understood Norway's position within the German *Lebensraum* as that of an equal nation and – as he was known for his contempt for imperial Britain and its colonialist practices – he ardently expressed his support for Nazi Germany, which was in turn used for propaganda. After the war and the German occupation of Norway, Knut Hamsun, his wife Marie and sons Arild and Tore faced public accusations of collaboration and treason. On 23rd of June 1945, Knut Hamsun was arrested and accused of anti-state activities and collaboration with the occupants. During the trial process, he went through a psychiatric evaluation at the psychiatric clinic in Oslo – to ensure that he indeed *could* be charged. During the war, Hamsun, who was in his 80s, had suffered many health issues, including a stroke that caused him difficulty to speak in addition to which he was almost deaf. Therefore, from the juridical point of view, the need to establish whether Hamsun, due to his advanced age and declining health, could be tried at all, was understandable. For the public, if Hamsun indeed would have been found mentally incompetent (or senile), it might perhaps have meant certain relief. Namely, the most extravagant action by Hamsun – his necrology to Hitler on 7th of May 1945 published in the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* – this may have been the the final drop that made many doubt Hamsun's sanity: clearly the occupation of Norway was over, so an expression of support for the collapsed Nazi regime, there and then, seemed unfounded and absurd. Hamsun was in fact "diagnosed" to suffer from "permanently impaired mental abilities" ("varig svekkede sjælsevner"),

[70] As described on Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "On Overgrown Paths, work by Hamsun." https://www.britannica.com/topic/On-Overgrown-Paths

[71] As described in the book introduction for *On Overgrown Paths* (Google Books 2018). https://books.google.ee/books/about/On_Overgrown_Paths.html?id=c-rqAAAAMAAJ&redir_esc=y

meaning that he did not stand trial for treason – although, in the eyes of the public he *was* accused of that – instead, he faced charges for his membership in the Norwegian National Unity Party (*Nasjonal Samling*). The criminal charges "for treason" were dropped and the court process over his accountability for collaboration lasted for two years. For his membership in the party, Hamsun was charged with a substantial fine. With the final appellation on 23rd of June 1948, Hamsun managed to get the fine reduced, but other than that the decision remained in force.

The trial and public outrage against Hamsun was, and remains, thought-provoking: he was accused condemned for his public support to Hitler and the Nazi ideology expressed in his writings and public appearances before and during the war. In fact, his guilt was seen to be manifested mainly *in his writings*. This is a questionable charge to make, and for that reason his last novel is especially interesting. Clearly, Hamsun's last book was his own reaction to what was happening: he denied that he was ever a member of the National Unity Party and saw the evaluation of his "mental abilities" to be a manifestation of outmost injustice and humiliation.

When the novel was finally published, there were few critics who viewed it as a literary work that should be regarded as part of Hamsun's legacy – these evaluations mostly emerged later. Indeed, it took decades before *On Overgrown Paths* was judged and valued as an autobiographical novel mostly for its literary merit.

3.3.1.1. On Overgrown Paths *as an apology of Hamsun? Context and form*

On Overgrown Paths combines both factual and fictional narration. It includes a fictional character "Martin Enevoldsen", but also brings in a character "Knud Pedersen" (Hamsun's legal name), whose experiences could be attributed to Hamsun (although the reader cannot be quite sure of this as Hamsun combines the first-person narration of "I" with the third-person narration in references to "Knud Pedersen"). "On overgrown paths" is a quote from Hamsun's 1906 novel *Under høststjernen* (Under the Autumn Star), that also centered around the semi-autobiographical character Knud Pedersen (this book was part of Hamsun's so-called Wanderer period[72]). The reader who knows Hamsun's work might expect a memoir-style narrative, the title – "on overgrown paths" – leaves the readers expecting a retrospective look back on past events, accessing paths that have not been wandered on for a long time. Here Hamsun reminds the reader of who he is, he manages to constantly return to his position as a (prominent) author and an artist, and he expects the reader to know this. He also expresses his need to write after having given it up for many years. Hamsun also describes writing as "words that leak from his pencil like drops from a

[72] The so-called "Wanderer novels" by Hamsun include *Under the Autumn Star* (1906), *A Wanderer Plays on Muted Strings* (1909) and *The Last Joy* (1912). Although, to some extent the "wanderer" characters can be found in almost all of Hamsun's novels.

broken faucet". He discusses writing as a creative, yet a compulsory process (Kangur 2009, 16):

> One, two, three, four – thus I sit and make notes and write down little odds and ends for myself. Nothing will come from it, it is only habit. Cautios words dribble out of me. I am a faucet that goes on dripping, one, two, three, four – (*On Overgrown Paths*, 1967, 63) [hereafter reffered to as OOP].

Although *On Overgrown Paths* is a short novel, structurally it is complex. The first part of the book is written as if a diary (Hamsun kept a personal diary during his forced stay at the retirement home and at the hospital). The "diary entries" specify the dates they were written, and other relevant dates (such as the date of his arrest, his stays at different locations, the dates for court hearings, as well as the dates when he was questioned by the police, etc.) mostly mentioned in chronological order. Still, for narrative effect, Hamsun first refuses to talk about his stay at the psychiatric clinic, but then returns to this perceived injustice with a letter addressed to the state attorney in which he accuses his psychiatrist Professor Langfeldt of incompetence (see pages 54–61 in OOP). To emphasize the importance of this injustice against his person and dignity, Hamsun mentions this subject several times throughout the book (see pages 91–103 in OOP).

Thus, although the reader can follow Hamsun's court case on the pages of *On Overgrown Paths*, the facts are colored by Hamsun's own emotional reactions. The timeframe for events described appears quite specific: the process of writing starts in 1945, with Hamsun's arrest, and concludes, rather abruptly, with the final court decision on 24th of June 1948. This three-year period covers Hamsun's first forced and then voluntary stay at a retirement home, followed by the descriptions of his time at the psychiatric hospital, and the development of his trial. However, as the book progresses, the dates and events become less important as the narrative becomes increasingly fragmented. Hamsun constantly expresses his desire for "judgement", for some kind of an outcome to be reached. Hamsun describes his eagerness for the wait to be over, although he acknowledges his own frail health and mentions that he is afraid that he might not be able to wait long enough. But when it comes to the matter of collaboration with the Nazi occupation in Norway and his support to Hitler – Hamsun has very little to say.

If we were to consider *On Overgrown Paths* as an apology of sorts – an explanation or at minimal a justification, which was what most of the public may have anticipated – these expectations are not met in the novel. Still, it provides a *kind* of an answer – a retort to the accusations that Hamsun faced after the war. He does not admit any guilt; on the contrary, by using irony and sarcasm to portray the people who were speaking against him, Hamsun presents his "trial" as a farce. One example of this is an account he provides already on the first pages of the book, describing how him and his wife Marie were placed under house arrest:

> The year is 1945.
>
> On May 26, the Chief of Police in Arendal came to Nørholm and served notice that my wife and I were under house arrest for thirty days. I had no warning. At his request my wife turned my guns over to him, and I had to write to him afterwards that I also had two pistols from the last Olympiad in Paris: he could get them whenever he wished. At the same time I wrote that presumably the house arrest was not to be understood literally since I had some distances to go in order to see to the work on the farm.
>
> After a while a man from the county commissioner's office in Eide came and got the two pistols. (OOP: 3)

Hamsun mocks the Chief of Police whether he should include "the pistols from the Olympic games in Paris" (obviously not weapons) in this "surrender". He indicates that he has better things to do with his time than to deal with these absurd requests, such as a farm to oversee.

Additionally, with judgmental irony, Hamsun describes the personnel at the retirement home as incompetent and petty. Hamsun complains that they fail to treat him with respect, openly showing their contempt and even refusing to talk to him – thus Hamsun remains alone and isolated (similarly to his situation at home):

> I putter about day after day. The three young nurses – student nurses actually – take turns coming up the hill with food for me, turn on their heel and disappear. "Thank you!" I shout after them. It gets a little lonesome, but I am used to being alone; even at home they do not talk to me because I am deaf and tiresome. (OOP: 5)

Like someone "out of the pages of a Russian novel", Hamsun considers himself being placed amongst whom he calls "political prisoners" in Norway after the war:

> It used to be that a political captive was only a character in Russian story books; we never saw one, for the whole idea was unknown to me. […] But today we have one who does count: he is legion in the land of Norway and comes in forty, fifty, some say sixty thousand copies. And perhaps in many thousand more. (OOP:11)

Hamsun also indicates that people who were judging him might also themselves be viewed as collaborators. He seems to ask, why is it that he is the one being accused and not any of "them", including doctors and judges, who had shared his political views:

> He asked what I thought of the National Socialistic group I fell in here at Grimstad. I answered that there were better people than I in the group. But I fell silent after mentioning that it had no fewer than four doctors, to name only one category. It sounded as though I was generally too fine to belong to the Nazi conspiracy. "There were also judges", I said. (OOP:8)

Hamsun is thus very critical of and expresses contempt for the authorities who were involved in charging him, including the judicial system, the state attorney, the police officers and last (but definitely not least) Dr. Gabriel Langfeldt who was in charge of his psychiatric evaluation. It was his psychiatric evaluation that most obviously made Hamsun feel stripped of his dignity, more so than any other action against him after the war. (Kangur 2009, 10–11)

Other people around Hamsun during that critical time are almost always depicted with a degree of obvious sarcasm disguised as self-irony, as Hamsun constantly claims that he "does not want to complain". In describing how he was ordered to the court for the hearing, Hamsun grumbles that he received no forewarning, and was overall treated like (or worse) than a prisoner in imperial Russia (again, Hamsun seems to draw parallels to his own situation and "imprisonment" as described in fiction he appreciates):

> *Today, September 22*, was called again before the examining magistrate.
>
> It is early in the morning, a little too early for me and the old people's home. I might have been forewarned but was not. What are telephones for? It is nothing a policeman need concern himself with; he can easily climb into car and be on his way, but the prisoner, he is to come along just as he is. I would very much have liked to be ready and dressed when I was to appear before the examining magistrate. Even in the czarist Russia they gave you time for a sigh. But not here. (OOP:32)

Instead of an explanation or a justification the reader is expecting from Hamsun about his beliefs and actions, we are given what could be the verbatim transcript (Hamsun claims it to be a "stenographical transcript") of his defense at the trial. This transcript is the focal point in Hamsun's *On Overgrown Paths,* here the manipulation of the reader through descriptions of everyday events and reminiscences of the past related to "waiting for the trial" culminates. We learn nothing about reactions to the speech on his defense in court, but Hamsun tells us several times about his appeals to the higher court and waits for its decision. Furthermore, Hamsun stresses his belief that – as an artist – he is above the material courts of his time, that his actions will "be judged again in a 100 years", by which time his accusers and their reasoning will all be forgotten (Kangur 2013, 387). The book is therefore not a defense, or an explanation aimed at his contemporaries, but a manifest for the future: "The evidence is available. Maybe it will be examined sometime." (OOP:103) Indeed, many have studied this material from Hamsun's legacy, in particular and most extensively the Danish journalist and author Thorkild Hansen.

3.3.1.2. Thorkild Hansen's perspective?

Knut Hamsun led a long and active life as a literary, cultural and a political figure. In studying Hamsun as a writer, from the perspective of his monumental literary legacy, it is easy to omit the last years of his life when he was writing less. Thus, many textbooks of literary history and other introductory texts into

Knut Hamsun's oeuvre have left out the last years of his life and his support for Nazi Germany, considering these biographically important facts, but not connecting them directly to his authorship. Still, as mentioned above, *On Overgrown Paths* is appreciated today both for its literary and biographical value, and as the last novel of Hamsun, it adds to the overall understanding of his legacy. In my opinion, what makes *On Overgrown Paths* stand out in the context of Hamsun's biography, is that he returns as a novelist after a long period of literary silence. His last novel works as a retrospective glimpse into Hamsun's life and literature. Here the reader can easily recognize themes from previous works by Hamsun (for example, the so-called Wanderer figures of Martin Enevoldsen and Knud Pedersen; the inner, contemplative monologue combined with references to nature, and so on).[73] However, true interest in "Knut Hamsun" as a cultural figure and a character in *On Overgrown Paths* is centered around the court proceedings and accusations against him. As Knut Hamsun himself expressed the need to "investigate the material" of the accusations against him and of "his case" in general, various biographical researchers have done exactly that.

By the Second World War, Knut Hamsun had achieved what some have called the "Olympian heights" in Norwegian society (Holden 1997). As a cultural figure, Hamsun was more of a myth than a man by the time that Norway was occupied.[74] He had considered himself finished as an active author, but his contributions from the previous decades had accumulated a wealth of public adulation that his status still rested on. Therefore, his betrayal must have been truly traumatic for the adoring public. The fact that this was significant has clearly been demonstrated by various biographies of Hamsun written outside of Norway. Internationally, there are two biographies of Hamsun that carry much weight in this regard, both translated into many languages. First is by British author Robert Ferguson titled *Enigma: The Life of Knut Hamsun* (Hutchinson, London 1987), this is a book that introduced Hamsun's life and the controversy around his support to the Fascist movement to the international public. The second biography that details the last years of Hamsun's life is by Norwegian

[73] Researchers of Hamsun have referred to many such examples in his last book. See for example Steinar Gimnes' *Sljölvbiografier. Skrift, fiksjon og liv* (Det Norske Samlanget, Oslo, 1998) and Ståle Dingstad's *Hamsuns strategier. Realisme, humor og kynisme* (Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, Oslo, 2003).

[74] Atle Kittang has summarized "the Norwegian Hamsun-trauma" as follows. "Hamsun shook up the special Norwegian myth of the Great Poet, which had developed historically in parallel with the creation of the modern Norwegian nation. Wergeland and Bjørnson had also helped to build up an image of the poet as the herald of Norwegian independence and Norway's national identity, and when Bjørnson died Knut Hamsun more or less enthusiastically adopted this role. The fact that he so clearly failed his country at the time of its greatest need may have helped to give the myth a blow that all 'good Norwegians' could only regard as an attack on the very cultural identity of the nation. This brought out a much more disturbing picture of the artist in conflict with society, a situation that has been much more difficult to take on board." See more in "Knut Hamsun and Nazism" (Kittang 1996).

biographer Ingar Sletten Kolloen, translated into English as *Knut Hamsun: Dreamer & Dissenter*. This biography was originally published by Gyldendal in Norway in 2003 and 2004, in two parts. The first book titled *Hamsun. Svermeren*, covers Hamsun's life as "a dreamer", as a ground-breaking author. The second part concentrates on dissent: *Hamsun. Erobreren,* tells of Hamsun's later years, especially about his sympathies towards the Nazi Germany and his downfall as an accused traitor.

In Scandinavia, the debate around Hamsun's cultural importance and his role as a Nazi supporter emerged and disappeared again over the decades following his death. As the importance of Knut Hamsun as an author could not be ignored, what remained was the question of how to introduce him to new generations after the Second World War. Should he be remembered as one of the giants of Norwegian culture, whose last decades of life were unfortunately impacted by "permanently impaired mental abilities", and thus these years should be ignored? Or should one read Hamsun's whole life and authorship in accordance to his utterances before and during the Second World War? As Ferguson and Kolloen show, Hamsun's "guilt" or the overall "enigma" of his life as a private and public figure, both were equally important for modern audiences in the 1980's and still at the turn of the century.

The book that in some regard preceded these discussions – or, one could say, renewed the debate in Scandinavia, was the novel in three volumes by Danish author Thorkild Hansen. In the documentary novel (the author does not refer to this as a biography) *Processen mod Hamsun* (1978 [*The Trial of Hamsun*]), Thorkild Hansen had the distinct intention of clearing Hamsun's name. In this, he used Hamsun's own writings, but especially *On Overgrown Paths* as reference material. Hansen often paraphrased sections from *On Overgrown Paths*, adding his own interpretation to words written by Knut Hamsun. For this Hansen was also criticized by his contemporaries for interpreting facts to fit his own purposes, particularly in reference to the case of Hamsun's "betrayal". (Kangur 2013, 388)

Much of Hansen's book can be viewed by drawing parallels to that of *On Overgrown Paths* – Hansen not only provides an interpretation of Hamsun's book, retelling events described in the novel, but he does so very closely, oftentimes transcribing Knut Hamsun's text almost word-for-word.[75] Indeed, also in his representation of the trial against Hamsun, when comparing Hansen's book with *On Overgrown Paths,* Thorkild Hansen obviously adopts the same position and perspective as Knut Hamsun himself. Here, Hansen's handling of the text from *On Overgrown Paths* (an autobiographical text that includes fictional elements, as mentioned above) seems to work in the same manner as with other biographical and historical sources that he refers to. However, whereas biography admittedly always is a subjective genre, where Thorkild

[75] This has invited a detailed comparison, see for example I. F. Syvertsen, "Dokumentasjon som alibi. Thorkild Hansens bruk av Hamsunkilder i sin dokumentariske roman Processen mod Hamsun". Master's thesis, Oslo University, Oslo, 1983.

Hansen's exploration into Hamsun's trial stands out, is that as a biographer (or documentarist) Hansen takes a clear position regarding Hamsun's "guilt" – or lack of it.

It is therefore not surprising that the 1978 publication of Hansen's work on Knut Hamsun's trial reopened a heated public debate about "Hamsun's guilt" decades after his death, but also made critics question the "subjectivity" and "legitimacy" of Thorkild Hansen as a biographer. Among the reasons for this is that Hansen adapts Hamsun's own attitude towards court officials, whom he regards with as much contempt as is reflected on the pages of *On Overgrown Paths*. The critics found Hansen's methods problematic; even to a point that Dr Gabriel Langfeldt accused him of following Knut Hamsun's perspective as if the only possible truth, disregarding alternatives.[76] As Hamsun accuses Langfeldt of unprofessionalism, so does – although indirectly – Thorkild Hansen. However, Hansen also works to fill the gaps in Hamsun's story that readers did not find on the pages of *On Overgrown Paths* – the additional biographical and documentary material referenced in the *Trial of Hamsun* is extensive. Going further, he evaluates this material, complements it with his personal perspective, and speculates on the reasoning and motivations of the main character as well as the other participants. Thus creating a truly compelling read, which is also very obviously a subjective take – Thorkild Hansen's perspective influenced by Knut Hamsun's writings – on historical-biographical events.

Here, Thorkild Hansen "not only follows Knut Hamsun's own viewpoint that the passage of time will overwrite the question of guilt, but that when dealing with the mind of an artistic genius, a lot can and will be accepted and forgiven" (Kangur 2013, 388). Furthermore, Hansen stresses Hamsun's importance (and that Hamsun himself is very aware of this status) as a world-famous author:

> Knut Hamsun knew that art was stronger than history. It could outlive events and could also be used to overcome them. Once more he had reached ground zero, like he had a year ago, when they came and arrested him at Nørholm, or when he, as a young man, stood on the front deck of "Thingvalla" and gazed at Kristiana. He was struck, so his bones hurt, but he did not scream, he wrote. […] Or rather, it could get even worse, it could be just the opposite, he could drag them by their ears into world fame, as one drags schoolboys by their ears into the corner of shame, mocking them into eternity, setting their disgraceful behaviour into immortality. Did his weak eyes no longer distinguish the ink that came out of his fountain pen?

[76] As a response to Hansen's book, two doctors who had evaluated Hamsun's mental state for his court case, Dr Langfeldt and Dr Ørnulv Ødegård, together even published a summary of Knut Hamsun's forensic psychiatric evaluation (*Den rettspykiatriske erklæring om Knut Hamsun*, Gyldendal 1978).

> It did not matter. A pencil was enough. (Hansen 1978, II–151) [my translation][77]

Hansen portrays Hamsun as an elderly man of poor health, with failing eyesight and painful joints, overcoming these obstacles to pick up a pencil to write "his words" – his only method of defense. Thorkild Hansen's narrative can, in my opinion, be viewed as a case of both "adaptation" and "appropriation". In creating the character of a suffering elderly artist, Hansen both speculates how Hamsun might have felt, ascribing thoughts, feelings and opinions to Hamsun. However, Hansen often also makes use of Knut Hamsun's own text and without validation or clear distinction between his own words and those of Hamsun. The reader has some difficulties with understanding whether these passages in Hansen's narrative are quoted from his source materials or whether he is guessing, imagining to prove his point. For example, when Hamsun in *On Overgrown Paths* describes his need to write, how the words constantly drip away from him, and how he considers life to be a blink of a star, today here, tomorrow gone – this is an existential contemplation on the brevity of human life and therefore, potentially also how his "guilt", in a larger perspective, has no real significance:

> One, two, three, four – thus I sit and make notes and write down little odds and ends for myself. Nothing will come of it, it is only a habit. Cautious words dribble out of me. I am a faucet that goes on dripping, one, two, three, four – Isn't there a star named Mira? I might have looked it up, but I have nothing to look it up in. Never mind. Mira is a a star that comes, shines a little, and is gone. That is the entire course of its life. Mankind, I think here of you. Of all living creatures in the world you are born to be almost a mere nothing. You are neither good or evil; you have come into being without any purpose. […] They are all shooting stars, all of them; they come, shine a little, and are gone. Come and go, as I came and went." (OOP: 63–64)[78]

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[77] "Knut Hamsun vidste også, at kunsten var stærkere end historien. Den kunne overleve begivenhederne, og den kunne også bruges til at overvinde dem. Endnu en gang var nulpunktet blevet ingangsætningspunktet, som det havde været det året før, da de kom og arresterede ham på Nørholm, eller da han som ung stod på fordækket af "Thingvalla" og så ind over Kristiania. Han var ramt, så det gjorde ondt ind i marven af hans knogler, men han skreg ikke, han skrev. […] Eller rettere, det skulle blive endnu værre, det skulle blive lige omvendt, han skulle trække dem ved ørene ind i verdensberømmelsen, som man trækker skoledrengene is skammekrogen, håne dem ind i evigheden, sylte deres skændsel i udødelighed. Kunne hans svage øjne ikke mere skelne blækket, der kom ud af hans fyldepen? Det spillede ingen rolle. En blyant var nok." (Hansen 1978, II-151)

[78] "En, to, tre, fire – slikt sitter jeg og noterer og skriver Smaastubber for mig selv. Det er ikke til noget, men bare gammel Vane. Jeg lækker varsomme Ord. Jeg er en Kran som staar og drypper, en, to, tre, fire – Er det ikke en Stjerne som kaldes Mira? Jeg kunde ha set efter, men jeg har ikke noget at se efter i. Det samme kan det være. Mira er en Stjerne som kommer, lyser litt og blir borte. Det er hele Levnetsløpet. Og Menneske, her tænker jeg paa dig. Av alt levende i Verden er du født til næsten ingen Ting. Du er hverken god eller ond,

Thorkild Hansen paraphrases this as follows:

> He was not writing. He only sat like this and made some notes out of old habit, leaked some careful words, like a dripping faucet... Isn't there a star that is called Mira? He dripped. He could have looked it up, but he had nothing to look it up in. Never mind that. Mira was a star that came, shone a little and was gone. It was the entire course of life. Mankind, here I'm thinking of you, he continued writing with his permanetly impaired mental abilities. That of all living world you are born to almost nothing. You are neither good or evil, you have come into being without any purpose [...] Marie was she called, Knut was his name. They didn't see each other anymore. They did not have enough life left in them for that.[79](Hansen 1978, II–158) [my translation]

Not only does Hansen appropriate Hamsun's contemplation over life, but Hansen also makes sure that his readers understand that a man with permanently impaired mental abilities could not have produced such prose. He repeats, with obvious irony, how Hamsun could not have truly been writing as he had for many decades:

> "No, he was not writing." [...] Weren't they supposed to just be there to die? [...] We must all die. But not right now, says Augustin. No, no, he wasn't writing. He sat there trying to repair his galos. He tried to sew the crack together with a strong woolen thread, but it didn't work, it cracked again in the stitches, it just got worse from that, and then there was nothing to say about that any longer. Other than that it had been a good galoche. He had gone wearing these galos to many countries despite the crack. It had also carried him on famed tours to Vienna and to Hitler. Now he had to hook it to the shoe with a laces. No, no, he was not writing. (Hansen 1978, II–157)[80] [my translation]

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du er blit til uten et tænkt Maal. […] Det er Vandrelys alle tilhope, de kommer, skinner litt og blir borte. Kommer og gaar, som jeg kom og gik." (Hamsun, *Paa gjengrodde stier*. 1953, 53)

[79] "Han skrev ikke. Han sad bare sådan og noterede lidt af gammel vane, lækkede nogle forsigtige ord, var som en kran, der stod og dryppede… – Er det ikke en stjerne, som kaldes Mira? dryppede han. Han kunne slå den op, men han havide ikke noget at slå op i. Det kunne være det samme. Mira var en stjerne, som kom, lyste lidt og blev borte. Det var hele levnedsløbet. Og menneske, der tanker jeg på dig, skrev han videre med sine varigt svækkede sjælsevner. Af alt levende i verden er du født til næsten ingenting. Du er hverken god eller ond, du er blevet til uden et bevidst formål. [...] Marie hed hun. Knut hed han. De så ikke hinanden mere. Det havide de slet ikke liv til." (Hansen 1978, II-158)

[80] Nej, han skrev ikke. […] Var det da ikke meningen, at de bare skulle være her for at dø? […] Vist skal vi alle sammen dø. Men ikke lige nu, siger Augustin. Nej, nej, han skrev ikke. Han sad og prøvede at reparaere sine galocher. […] Han prøvede at sy revnen sammen med en stærk uldtråd, men det gik ikke, den revnede igen i stingene, det blev bare værre af det, det var sket med den, og så var det ikke mere at sige om det. Andet end at det havde været en god galoche. Han havde gået med den i mange lande trods revnen. Den havde også fulght

The sequence above follows Knut Hamsun's own narrative in *On Overgrown Paths.* Thorkild Hansen here leads the reader into the mind of Knut Hamsun, who instead of waiting patiently for his death, is working on repairing his old shoes that had "carried him to Vienna and to visit Hitler" but had then fallen apart, as Hamsun's old life had fallen apart and, at this age and time, he was back to a "ground zero". However, Hansen, rather surprisingly, also connects this to Knut Hamsun's relationship with his wife Marie (this connection is missing from *On Overgrown Paths*). When reading Hansen's mammoth work of three volumes, it seems that besides the storyline of Hamsun's trial also a psychoanalytical interpretation of the story of "Knut and Marie" is at work. Thorkild Hansen views the story of marriage of Knut and Marie as being closely connected to the story of Hamsun's political actions before and during the war, and their consequences. The "psychoanalytical dimension" also follows the standards of a biography from that time. The story of Marie Hamsun, as presented by Thorkild Hansen, is about the wife of a world-famous novelist: always in the background, never acknowledged, therefor bitter and easily manipulated by the Nazi politicians.

The time frame for the trial mentioned in the book is 1940 to 1952, but it is not a chronologically narrated story. We are presented with many glimpses to the childhood and youth of Knut Hamsun, and to his earlier writings. The text also refers to the future, the time after Knut's death. Herein, Hansen's narrative follows the expectations of a biography. But the central focus of Hansen's novel lies on the court trial and here Hansen's book quite closely follows Knut Hamsun's *On Overgrown Paths*. Hansen builds his work around the stages in the trial proceedings, whereas the first part is titled "Criminal" *(Gjerningmannen)*, second is "Accusation" (*Anklagen*), the third is "Attest" (*Vitnet*), the forth part is titled "Judgement" (*Dommen*), and the final part of Hansen's work is named "Punishment" (*Straffen*). Notably, even though the stories related to Knut Hamsun's family are intertwined with excerpts of justifications for Hamsun's actions during the war and their subsequent consequences after the war, it is the question of Hamsun's guilt or lack thereof that is prominent. (Kangur 2009, 27–28)

In reading *On Overgrown Paths*, the similarities between "Knut Hamsun" the narrator, and "Knut Hamsun" the central character in Hamsun's as well as in Thorkild Hansen's book strike as obvious. This has been explained as an effect of the literary merit of Knut Hamsun's last novel, that influenced Thorkild Hansen's perspective on events in such a way that he intentionally recreated the same "character" in his documentary novel.[81] Much of this impression can be

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ham en navkunding gang til Wien og til Hitler. Nu måtte han surre den fast til skoen med et snøreband. Nej, nej, han skrev ikke. (Hansen 1978, II-157)

[81] "For Knut Hamsun in particular, everything was a matter of composition, of writing. Certain facts are withheld, others are embellished. How does even the most skillful documentarist glean the facts from fiction, when he is dealing with the finer nuances of the human psyche, the inner life and emotions of a master of prose and human psychology?" (Stecher-Hansen 1999, 248). See also: Kangur (2013, 389).

attributed to Hansen's use of events and perceptions of these events narrated by Knut Hamsun in his own book. In part, Thorkild Hansen uses Hamsun's text to embellish his own narrative – by adding his own interpretation, Hansen is appropriating – or adapting – *On Overgrown Paths* for the use of his story.

As discussed above, an important part of the story of the trial is the writing process: Thorkild Hansen's book is focused on the difficulties Hamsun faced in court and in society, as well as an artist for his latest work. When Knut Hamsun ironically describes his everyday life after the war – in much reduced circumstances, one can say – Hansen uses these descriptions to give an emotional spin to his story of a great man unjustly accused. For the world, Hamsun might have appeared as an old, physically ill man who was hard of hearing and likely senile, a potentially weak-minded man out of touch with reality. However, the character "Hamsun" in the book by Thorkild Hansen is an unjustly accused writer, ironic and intelligent master of words.

3.3.2. Jan Troell's film adaptation: *Hamsun* (1996)

If, as discussed above, Thorkild Hansen's documentary novel *The Trial of Hamsun* relies heavily on the autobiographical writings of Knut Hamsun, then how should we view the Swedish director Jan Troell's film *Hamsun* (1996)? The title sequence states that the film's script is "written after" Hansen's book: "Manus Per Olov Enquist efter Thorkild Hansens bog "Processen mod Hamsun*"* [*Hamsun*, 0:03:18][82]. However, as both the screenwriter Per Olov Enquist (who published his "film narrative" as a separate work after the film was launched) and film director Jan Troell have attested in their interviews, they relied on "several other sources" besides Hansen's book in their interpretation of "Hamsun's case". (Kangur 2013, 383) In my article "Knut Hamsun as a Literary and Film Character" (2013), I claim that much of the film adaptation's interpretation of the character "Knut Hamsun" relies on Thorkild Hansen's narrative, which, in turn, most obviously has followed Knut Hamsun's perspective. Is it therefore an adaptation of Thorkild Hansen's book, or more indirectly, a film "based on the true story" of Knut Hamsun's life as it has emerged from various other (auto)biographical materials?

Jan Troell's film *Hamsun* (1996) is a Swedish-Danish-Norwegian-German co-production in regard to actors, film crew and financing. Troell's choice of an international cast (that include Swedish-born actor Max von Sydow as "Hamsun" and Danish actress Ghita Nørby as "Marie", but most other main characters are played by Norwegian actors) seems random, considering the language barriers. In its international context this did not create any questions – as the film relied on subtitles, the nuances of spoken language became irrelevant. While these casting choices led some to consider *Hamsun* an example of a

[82] I am referring hereafter to 2009 DVD copy of *Hamsun* (In collection "Hamsun's samleboks", Oslo: Norsk Filminstitutt: Nordisk Film.)

"Nordic film" (i.e., a film that transcends its national borders), others believed that the film thus lost some of its authenticity. In *Transnational Cinema in a Global North: Nordic Cinema in Transition (2005),* Andrew K. Nestingen and Trevor G. Elkington viewed Jan Troell's *Hamsun* as an illustrative example of "a Norwegian prestige film", but they saw the multinational/multilingual cast as the main problem with this status: "it complicates the film's authenticity as the story of Knut Hamsun". (Nestingen and Elkington 2005, 5) In discussing *Hamsun* as a trans-Nordic film, Nestingen and Elkington raised an interesting question: which audiences does the film *Hamsun* target? They argued that:

> […] while the film is an auteur film directed by Jan Troell, it is also a genre film that seeks to capitalize on the popularity of European heritage films among European and American audiences. Hamsun furnishes an example of the way Nordic cinemas are dealing with a transnational media environment. Whether films like Hamsun are seen as clever negotiations of present conditions or Europudding mishmashes is open for debate. (Nestingen and Elkington 2005, 2)

Whereas *Hamsun* as a production is indeed a multi-national endeavor, the question raised by Nestingen and Elkington in their discussion above is, again: *whose* "Hamsun" we see in the film? As the story of Knut Hamsun's downfall hold such importance for the Norwegian – and perhaps also for the Scandinavian public – the desire to appropriate the film's significance to a certain cultural context is understandable. Nestingen and Elkington point out that, as *Hamsun* was a production for the international audience, marketed in Europe and North America, it resulted in curious reactions from the audiences who had no prior knowledge of Hamsun's "case". Using *Hamsun* as an illustrative example, Nestingen and Elkington conclude that this film, as well as modern Nordic cinema in general, "must be understood at least in part in the context of a Global Hollywood."

> While the debate surrounding the film's content and its stance on Hamsun's life was lively in Norway and the surrounding countries, American audiences by and large were more interested in the film as another example of European costume drama and were not nearly as concerned with the issues of history that the film raised for Nordic audiences. This phenomenon isolates a key contradiction in considering Nordic film in transnational circulation. […] The film is presented as a trace of the European "other", a peek into a history specifically not "our" – that is, not the history associated with Hollywood – even if the particularity of that history is inconsequential. It is the image of history that matters. That Hamsun was based on the true story of a Norwegian novelist became a curiosity, grounds for explanation by film reviewers. (Nestingen and Elkington 2005, 5) [my emphasis]

This conclusion seems to be based on the reception of *Hamsun* by international audiences, especially in English-speaking countries. One reviewer in particular

is been quoted by Nestingen and Elkington above: Kevin Thomas' article "Provocative, Haunting Life of 'Hamsun'" in LA Times (Thomas 1997). Besides the mistake of naming Ghita Nørby from Denmark a "Norwegian actress", Thomas' review summarises the overall effect that *Hamsun* had on viewers well (regardless of whether they were familiar with his "case" or not). The reviewer has grasped what the film obviously set out to do which is to create a nuanced, layered story of the last decades of Knut Hamsun's life and his downfall, both as viewed by himself and by others:

> It is above all a cautionary tale about the artist isolating himself from the world and from his family at great peril. It is a love story at its most tempestuous and agonized. It is a World War II picture told from an unusual and provocative perspective, and as such, a splendid period piece. It is a haunting portrait of valiant old age. (Thomas 1997)

I find this observation relevant to how the film Hamsun, as *adaptation*, and as a historical-biographical film (as a "image of history") was received. As the international public was not familiar with Thorkild Hansen's documentary-biographical novel, the film was often approached as an independent piece of creative work. One could also claim that the spotlight on "Hamsun's case" had faded by the time the film came out, so international audiences did not know much about *On Overgrown Paths,* even though it was in the public eye when first published and translated into many languages. Thus, *Hamsun* as a historical-biographical film re-opened the discussions around Knut Hamsun as an author and a Nazi sympathizer, evidenced by reviews in English-language media. For example, Stephen Holden (1997) in his film review in The *New York Times* titled "From His Olympian Heights, Deaf to the Alarm Below", raised the issue that had also puzzled the Nordic public which was "Hamsun's fall from grace" or what is known as the so-called "Norwegian Hamsun-trauma" – specifically, how could such an important figure in terms of national pride and identity betray its nation? (Holden 1997)[83]

The film did, indeed, reignite the "Hamsun debate" by creating and renewing interest for Hamsun in Scandinavia and abroad. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the discussion and reviews concentrated on Hamsun's sense of guilt for collaboration (or lack thereof). In Scandinavia, the debate also touched upon the veracity and "documentarism" of Thorkild Hansen's book. Max von Sydow's performance as Hamsun, as well as Ghita Nørby's Marie, also received much attention – most of the reviews and commentaries agreed that the casting and acting was brilliant. Still, very little (if any at all) attention was given to Jan Troell's film narrative or the film *as an adaptation*.

Hamsun can be viewed as two interconnected storylines, first of which is what ties the narrative together – the story of Hamsun's family life, especially his relationship with his wife Marie. (Although, the film offers some inter-

[83] See also Kittang (1996) [quoted here on in section 3.3.1.2].

pretation on how Hamsun's younger children might have experienced their family's downfall after the war, especially in the case of youngest daughter Ellinor, these episodes are add-ons, that do not contribute much to the overall story.) Here, the film clearly relies on Thorkild Hansen's portrayal of Marie Hamsun as the main reason for Knut's connections with the national socialist movement in Norway and in Hitler's Germany. The events before and during the war are mostly presented from the perspective of Marie and their children. Knut Hamsun as a character is viewed through the eyes of his family, his acquaintances, as well as the general public (see for example the reactions to Hamsun's articles that encourage the Norwegian resistance to lay down their weapons) [*Hamsun*, 0:28:00].

It is the second half of the film, however, that focuses on the introspection of the ageing literary giant. Thorkild Hansen, as mentioned above, relied heavily on the autobiographical material left behind by Knut Hamsun, especially *On Overgrown Paths*. The film, as the adaptation of Thorkild Hansen's documentary novel, follows in the same direction.

What is the core scene in the storyline of *Hamsun*? Here opinions differ, and it seems that each review of the film draws its own conclusion. For many, the most memorable and intriguing scene is when Hamsun meets Hitler. Historically speaking, it carries no significance. However, for the personal story of Hamsun and the case against him, it is of major importance: the delusion that Hamsun held for being able to "influence" Hitler and negotiate "better terms" for Norwegians under occupation, and his disappointment when he failed, is emphasized both in film and in Thorkild Hansens documentary novel. However, Knut's turbulent relationship with Marie and eventual reconciliation is what ties the film together. Therefore, it is difficult to view the plot in any singular way. Overall, I find the story multilayered. Firstly, "Knut Hamsun" as a traitor and a source of national shame: exemplified by his arrest, time at a retirement home and in a psychiatric hospital, and court proceedings. The second layer is that of Hamsun as a husband and a father, including Marie Hamsun's story (from 1935 to 1952), and the individual stories of their children (especially their youngest, Ellinor, whose substance abuse and mental issues are connected to the family drama). Knut Hamsun is clearly the central character, but his story is heavily contested by that of his wife's and family's. Surrounding all this – evident in the imagery and direct references – is the portrait of Knut Hamsun, the ageing author.

The film's linear timeline is interrupted by cross-cutting between the "now" (time immediately after Hamsun's arrest) and the story of his downfall, that play out in several nonlinear scenes (dated before the end of the war, where the time can often be deduced from dialogue or use of props such as newspaper headlines). Film is also intercepted with various scenes (both from the past and from the narrated time of the story following his arrest) portraying other characters central to Hamsun's story. In my view, the story culminates with his court trial, in the sequence that covers him being taken from his home to his appearance in court, and all events lead up to his court appearance. Hamsun is

portrayed at the retirement home, following his routine of checking his timepiece and adjusting the hall clock, "fixing" his shoes with black ink to not show their wear, and combing his styled moustache [*Hamsun*, 1:44:00] – all activities completed with certain aggression and a sense of expectation – Hamsun is obviously ready to defend himself. The scenes from his court hearing, however, present a different picture. He is immediately surrounded by flashing cameras ("No photos," or if translated directly: "Don't shoot," he tells the journalists). Blinded by flashlights, Hamsun is led to his chair – an obvious reference to an old man needing help. [*Hamsun*, 1:45:24] The prosecutor's speech, the data presented at his trial as it is read out loud, is drowned and blurred, as the film cuts to images of the wall clock to highlight time passing. "The greater the man, the greater is his responsibility", the prosecutor says. Hamsun is portrayed as sitting patiently, obviously unaware of the proceedings around him. When finally it is Hamsun's turn to present his defence [*Hamsun*, 1:45:34], he takes out his prepared speech. He stands up, stumbles slightly, but refuses assistance. Standing in front of the judges, Hamsun tells them that "his articles are available for all eyes", that he does not deny his writings and he stands by his words, then as well as now. With shaking hands, supporting himself by leaning against the table, Hamsun tells the court that he values the Norwegian court and justice system highly, but not as highly as he values his own sense of good and evil, right and wrong. [*Hamsun*, 1:47:00] The camera focus cuts from a close-up of his face to his hands (as he tries to control the constant tremors), to the judges and audience (his sons are present as well). Their reactions of sympathy and embarrassment (for Hamsun obviously looses his place several times during his speech) as they listen to Hamsun's defense, are most obviously mirrored in their expressions. But mostly, in this scene, it is the character Hamsun who stands at the center. He is pictured in either a medium close-up or close-up: as we concentrate on his words, his body as well as his voice betray him. Hamsun is portrayed here as he appears throughout the film – an elderly man, whose words once could have moved thousands, but now isolated, infirm. Still, he uses this as an explanation: nobody told him, as he sat alone, deaf and abandoned in his room, that what he wrote was wrong – nobody had anything against him to say, "in the whole country", he accuses. The newspapers, *Aftenposten* and *Fritt Folk,* the only knowledge he had from the outside, did not inform him that what he wrote was wrong. So how could he know? His defense speech, as performed in the film, is partial and a much-shortened transcript from the pages of *On Overgrown Paths.* What is quoted, however, is done so almost directly (considering that the speech is translated into Swedish in Sydow's performance.) With voice shaking, Hamsun describes how he did try to help, but in the end, he ended up – in everyone's eyes at least – betraying the very same Norway he tried to help. It is this loss, his personal loss, that he needs to carry now, while waiting for the final judgement on his life. Here, as he ends his speech, the film both quotes directly from the book and adds: "Det var bare disse få og enkle ting jeg ønsket a uttrykke ved denne leilighet, for ikke hele tiden å være likeså stum som jeg er døv." [Quoted in film

as in *On Overgrown Paths*, p. 147.] Here in this quote Hamsun tells the court that "I just needed to name a few facts." [*Hamsun*, 1:51:07] and that "the rest can wait for another time. [*Hamsun*, 1:51:09]. A better time and another court, perhaps, as Hamsun himself quotes his court speech in *On Overgrown Paths*:

> Let it be. It can wait until another time, perhaps until better times and for another court than this. Another day dawns tomorrow, and I can wait. I have time on my side. Living or dead, it's all the same, and above all it's all the same to the world how it goes for one single person, in this case me. But I can wait. I suppose that is what I will have to do. (OOP:147)

Here, the parallels between the three works – Hamsun's *On Overgrown Paths*, Hansen's *Processen mod Hamsun* and Troell's *Hamsun* – and the historical events are not only literal, the defense speech is documented. Thorkild Hansen has used and interpreted it extensively in his book. (See pages 96–106 in the third volume of *Processen mod Hamsun*). Knut Hamsun himself also states on the pages of *On Overgrown Paths* that he includes the defence speech "as transcribed". The film narrative, so far, has led up to this point, a crucial and central scene, closely "based on" documentary evidence. However, the portrait of Knut Hamsun that we see here, confirms how the author has portrayed himself on the pages of *On Overgrown Paths*: a great mind, with failing body, experiencing great injustice and indignity of a "judgement", that would be better left for another time and another court.

How Hamsun as a character is established in film, becomes clear in the first few scenes, in the title sequence that forms a sort of a "prologue". The film opens with a blank screen, we can hear a sound of writing (pencil scratching paper) and the extradiegetic piano music. The first scene portrays a man writing, sitting at a desk (Max von Sydow as "younger Hamsun"). And as he raises his eyes, the film cuts to a shot of open water, mirroring trees and plants therein, with a subtle disturbance of circles on the water. This scene is accompanied by a voice-over of Max von Sydow reading (in Swedish) from Hamsun's *Under Høststjærnen. En Vandrers Fortælling. 1906*: "As I walk down the overgrown path through the forest…" [*Hamsun*, 00:17–00:19] The sounds of water and voice are gradually replaced with that of a clock ticking, cut to the (blurred) face of a pocket watch. The watch glass mirrors a man sitting at a desk, and the sudden sound of knocking interrupts this calmness. This title sequence introduces the character "Knut Hamsun" in film: he does not concern himself with what is happening around him, but in his mind, he wanders the past and is occupied with the passage of time. The next scene of the title sequence shows Hamsun leaving his home, while a little girl throws a book at him, telling him that her mother ordered her to do so. She asks Hamsun why he became a traitor. [*Hamsun*, 0:03:25–0:03:42) Hamsun does not explain himself, neither does he make excuses. Film cuts again to a close-up of Hamsun standing under a window. A gradual transition to the next scene shows him sitting alone in a dark room. Here, the title sequence ends with the movie title

"Hamsun". This is followed by an explosion of a Terboven's bunker. We hear loud music, a Norwegian national anthem playing, accompanied by documentary film clips of jubilating crowds in Oslo. With the national anthem of Norway playing in the background, the film cuts to a close-up of a burning photo of Hitler that finally fades out. (Kangur 2009, 54–55)

This introduction/title sequence is quite long and obviously meant to set the scene for the following story. The contrast between the lyrical sounds and images of nature and symbols of time passing are cut with fragmented episodes of characters and scenes depicting the end of the war in Norway. The most obvious connection that one can draw from this montage, is that the film consists of two separate stories, told from different perspectives: one is that of the end of the war in Norway and the meaning of this for Hamsun and his family. Another is that of an old man, at the end of his life, waiting, isolated and alone. Within a few minutes, the film has introduced its context to the viewer and has done so by using the familiar, "recirculating" images of the Second World War. Here, the film obviously is mindful of the international audience with likely no previous knowledge about Hamsun's biography nor the occupation of Norway.

The film narrative itself begins with the year 1935, with a fight between Knut and Marie, the separation that follows, documents Marie's meeting with Quisling, and her engagement with the Natonal Unity Party in Norway. More background material to highlight the connection between the Hamsuns and Nazis is provided with a picture of Hamsun accepting a German literary prize in his garden, in 1939. Film thus narrates events that are important both from the standpoint of a film narrative and the setting of the historical-biographical life. Some examples of this include the meticulous dates for certain scenes and Hamsun's newspaper articles (using both voice-over narration, characters reading these and reconstructions as images on screen). (Kangur 2009, 56)

The title sequence and first minutes of the film leave no doubt that Troell wishes to establish his portrayal of Knut Hamsun as that of an author of great renown: the references to *Under the Autumn Star* and *On Overgrown Paths,* the lyrical images of nature, all allude to that. Marie Hamsun reads *Growth of the Soil* several times throughout the film. But this is the Hamsun of the past. The Hamsun as of now, in contrast, is an old man puttering about with his time-pieces, entertaining himself by playing solitaire and having trouble moving and hearing. In contrast, Hamsun is still titled with epithets like the "novelist king", "master of words", "magic flute," etc. (Kangur 2009, 58) This contrast of the "myth" and of man is present both in Thorkild Hansen's book and in the debate on *On Overgrown Paths*.

What both Thorkild Hansen, Per Olov Enquist and Jan Troell seem to agree on is picturing Marie Hamsun as the cause for Knut Hamsun's political actions before and during the war. As Knut is more or less cut off from the realities of war, Marie becomes his representative, his voice and his ears. By creating this image of an author in his "ivory tower", who is totally dependent on his family's assistance in everyday matters, the film *Hamsun* has shifted the "guilt" of Hamsun-as-a-traitor to Marie's character. This means that the figure of Marie

Hamsun is given almost equal screen time with that of the main character. She emerges as a frustrated wife of a great man, who tries to establish herself both politically and socially, but cannot or will not separate herself and her opinions from that of her husband.

When Hamsun's guilt is under discussion, it is presented with the reasoning we get from *On Overgrown Paths* – that all the writings from Hamsun during the war were meant to avoid casualties of pointless resistance. Jan Troell gives us a scene wherein both Knut and Marie Hamsun see young boys in Grimstad who are gathering to fight against the German invasion. In film [*Hamsun*, 0:27:11–0:29:07] a discussion between Knut and the boys takes place: "Where are you going with that gun?", Hamsun asks. A bright-eyed young man turns to him and says that they are going to fight to protect "Hamsun and his novels" – that are part of the soul of Norway – from German invaders. However, as Hamsun turns to leave he mutters in contempt: "Norwegians!" This is followed by a reference (we both see Hamsun writing and hear the text read out in voice-over) to his article in *Aftenposten* that encourages to quit resistance and accept the new order. We know from watching the film that these boys lack training and weapons. They say that they have only "three bullets" each, but that this equals "three dead Nazis", which is to emphasise the heroic nature of this resistance. The film narrative presents us with screenshots of young men in trucks turning increasingly quiet, intercepted with scenes of Hamsun seated behind his desk and writing the words we hear in voice-over by Max von Sydow. Finally, the perspective shifts to that of a man reading the newspaper and telling his companions how "our esteemed Nobelist invites Norwegian soldiers to desert!" – and all agree, that "this means treason" [*Hamsun*, 0:29:00-0:30:34]. Here, the viewer receives information why Hamsun "became a traitor" – it was his intention to help, first and foremost to avoid violence, as the film seems to claim. In this interpretation, the film follows Thorkild Hansen's perspective most faithfully. This is also what Knut Hamsun emphasized in his defence speech at court – that "his writings" were mostly intended to avoid a bloodshed. (Kangur, 2009, 63)

As the film progresses, the narrative focuses more on Hamsun's feelings and his perspective on the events, and here many parallels between the film and *On Overgrown Paths* continue. Besides the progress (or lack thereof) of his trial, Hamsun describes his everyday life at the hospice and how his home arrest and lack of funds have brought him down. Hamsun describes himself mending socks and making his bed. We learn about the attitude of people around him, the nurses who do not greet him and show their contempt (this is how Hamsun perceives their actions), by handing him food that has splashed around on the tray.[84]

[84] "One of the three young nurses shoves my tray onto my table, turns on her heel and goes out. 'Thank you!" I call after her. No, the three nurses do not change their tactics. They probably have hard time of it coming up the hill without spilling the coffee or the soup. Maybe. But the tray is awash." (OOP, 18) – Hamsun rises several times this issue of "young nurses" and other personnel at institutions he is more or less forced to stay in, as being

Particularly in these scenes from the retirement home and hospital, we can see influences and direct quotes from *On Overgrown Paths* in Troell's film. (Kangur 2013, 391) Overall, these quotes and scenes also contribute towards transmitting Hamsun's own view of how he was treated without respect:

> That is the way I am to have it; it is what I deserve. In the beginning of my stay here I tried to explain to them that I had not killed anyone, nor stolen anything nor set fire to a house, but it made no impression on them, only bored them. Now I explain nothing more; it is nothing to make fuss over. (OOP: 18)

Hamsun's novel, Hansen's book and Troell's film all depict Hamsun as once much respected, a significant cultural figure, now an old man who tries to stand up for himself in precarious circumstances. The (only) means at his disposal are words and his writing. Two examples, where direct references to the writing process stand out in the film, as follows.

Hamsun is portrayed sitting and writing when his daughter Cecilia visits him. [*Hamsun*, 1:21:10–1:22:25] She asks, what is Hamsun writing? And Hamsun replies that simply some words he *must* write, as he has not written in 15 or 18 years. He tells that he needs to start again, return to the overgrown paths, "then he can be happy" (this is a reference to the beginning of the film, when Hamsun is portrayed as a younger man, writing his novel *Under the Autumn Star*).

In another scene, Hamsun is depicted sitting on his bed, in his underwear, writing again. [*Hamsun*, 1:42:49] The nurse, jokingly (while emptying Hamsun's bedpan) asks him what he is writing – surely not a novel? – as she considers him to be too old for that. Hamsun admits to being "too old for that" and answers that "this will be a book from a mind with permanently impaired abilities", but that before he can finish, he must receive his verdict in court.

As a viewer, approaching this film as an adaptation with previous knowledge of both Thorkild Hansen's and Knut Hamsun's narratives, I find that the film adaptation does not "stray" from the central issue in both works: that of the possible "guilt" of Knut Hamsun. Studying this film as an adaptation from the point of view of comparison to its quoted source material, that of Hansen's book, shows that it follows Thorkild Hansen's perspective in its overall approach to the story of Hamsun's character (although, obviously, the story is very much condensed). Thorkild Hansen, again, in his representation of Knut Hamsun's "guilt" and trial, used Hamsun's writings to present the character, the man and the author.[85]

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intentionally "passive-aggressive" (in almost similar wording, compare OOP: 5, quoted here in sub-chapter 3.3.1.1).

[85] I analyse the construction of "character Knut Hamsun" in film more closely in my article "Knut Hamsun as a Literary and Film Character" (Interlitteraria, 2013 12/2, pp. 382–396).

3.3.3. Chapter conclusion

Overall, I find that the film *Hamsun* works as a rather close adaptation to Thorkild Hansen's novel, despite the length and many "sidetracks" of the latter. The actor Max von Sydow portrays the stubborn but a frail old man well, without losing sight of Knut Hamsun as one of "the greatest authors of modern time". However, the intertextual perspective and connection of this adaptation to Knut Hamsun as an author comes forward in the visual language: in the scenes depicting nature and light reflecting on water, in the clear focus on the progress of time (exemplified by Hamsun's obsession with always checking the time and adjusting clocks).

As a narrative, *Hamsun* is not linear – there are large gaps in chronology and informational flow in the story, which has the Norwegian viewers at an advantage due to their better access to contextual information compared to other nations, who would not be aware of many of the historical or biographical facts relevant to the story. Some events in film are meticulously dated (e.g. subtitles with year of date on screen and we see dates in newspapers, etc.). Much focus is on representing historical events as factually as possible: known historical figures such as Quisling, Terboven and Hitler appear on screen, documentary material (film clips, photos, newspaper articles) about the Nazi invasion and occupation of Norway is included. Thus, this is *not only* a personal story of Knut Hamsun, but one that has wider historical-political context and significance. This emphasis is considered necessary for international audiences that may lack the knowledge of "Hamsun's case".

In her article "*Whose Hamsun? Author and Artifice: Knut Hamsun, Thorkild Hansen and Per Olov Enquist*" Marianne Stecher-Hansen (1999) asks exactly that: whose Hamsun is it we meet in film? As she analyzes what she refers to as "the two texts behind" Jan Troell's film, *Processen mod Hamsun* and Per Olov Enquist's film script published in novel form titled *Hamsun. En filmberättelse*, she does not include Knut Hamsun's *On Overgrown Paths* as part of source material for the adaptation. Instead, Stecher-Hansen identifies the major differences between the approaches by Hansen and Enquist (and subsequently also Troell's) to be the question over Hamsun's "guilt". According to Stecher-Hansen, Enquist accepts this as a "foregone conclusion" and instead structures his narrative around the Hamsun family drama. (Stecher-Hansen 1999, 251)

In my understanding, *Hamsun* works as an adaptation of Thorkild Hansen's documentary novel, firstly because it holds true to the theme of "Hamsun as a traitor", but also as it ties this together with the characterization of Marie Hamsun that Thorkild Hansen has provided. Troell's film can be seen to comprise two storylines: the war-time events and their aftermath. The first storyline is mostly depicted through other characters, especially Marie Hamsun. The latter is Knut Hamsun's story of his trial. Due to its content, in my opinion, the book can likely never be read outside of the debate of Hamsun as a cultural and political figure, nor far removed from the controversy around the question of his "guilt".

Even though the film does not directly tell us, as Thorkild Hansen does, that accusations against Knut Hamsun were unjust, it certainly heavily implies this.

In connection to the conclusions above, mentioning Per Olov Enquist's film narrative in book form seems prudent, since Enquist was responsible for writing the film script. Notably, the book itself was published in 1996 as a separate book, as a "literary film narrative", not a film script. This forms an invaluable insight into the process of filmmaking and what follows, as Enquist's book interacts in the context of both film adaptation and its source material(s). Therefore, although I have here chosen not to scrutinize the published text by Per Olov Enquist, both comments and thoughts by Enquist regarding his approach to the source materials and Knut Hamsun's character are interesting to consider. In the foreword to *Hamsun. En filmberättelse* [*Hamsun. A film narrative*] Enquist tells us a lot about the process of adaptation and characterizes his narrative in terms of genre, and its connections to the film, and to the source material. (Enquist 1996) Enquist's "literary film narrative" is interesting in how he explains the sources that he used in creating the film script. He lists, obviously, *Trial of Hamsun* as the main point of origin, but he includes other books written by Knut and Marie Hamsun. Here he mainly refers to Marie's autobiography *Regnbuen* ([*Rainbow*] 1953) and her memoir *Under gullregnen* ([*Under the Golden Chain Tree*] 1959) that offer Marie's perspective on the character of Knut Hamsun. Enquist also adds a lot of his own interpretation of "Knut and Marie's" story to the literary script that is very much a drama about a marriage conflict. And this focus on the marital crises as one reason for the "downfall" of the Hamsun family, is also clearly present in the film.

Most film reviews in the international media do not mention the connections between the source text – Thorkild Hansen's text – and the film narrative. Rather, the character of Knut Hamsun in film stands out as a historical figure. The first two film examples I discussed cannot easily be considered without reference to their source texts. Both W. Szpilman's memoir and Anonyma's diary were widely known, also amongst international audiences. Partly, the film adaptations based on these books relied on that their source texts were already "pre-sold". Popularity of these two works is one obvious reason why the adaptation commenced. However, it is not the only reason, and one can argue that it is not the most important reason for why these film adaptations were created. The production of *Hamsun*, as described by Per Olov Enquist in the introduction to his "film narrative" in book form, informs that the process from idea (when Thorkild Hansen first approached Jan Troell with his idea), to film release, took many years. (Enquist 1996) That the film then not only managed to re-open the "Hamsun debate" for the Norwegian audience, but introduced this subject successfully for international audiences (as can be read from its reviews), shows that public interest for the past-in-film can cross national borders. Thorkild Hansen's *Processen mod Hamsun* was virtually unknown in Europe and in the Anglo-American cultural sphere. But, in the wake of *Hamsun,* several other written biographies of Hamsun's life have become successful internationally. It is a biographical film set on the backdrop of the events of the

Second World War in Norway and its aftermath. What could be the relevance of this film for the international audience? As Nestingen and Elkington have argued, "*Hamsun* stands out as a 'genre film', that capitalize[s] on the popularity of European heritage films among European and American audiences." (Nestingen and Elkington 2005, 2)

If the material for a historical-biographical film is based on subjective interpretations and especially on the autobiographical creation of a character, then the veracity of the film as representation of "history", comes into question. Surely, this does not diminish the value of the film adaptation, but historical (and biographical) films must constantly face issues mirrored in the production, reception and story of Troell's *Hamsun*.

CONCLUSION

In both fiction and non-fiction genres, when discussing adaptations, the origin and context of the source texts and adaptations are important. In my thesis, I have focused on films based on (auto)biographical texts that originate (meaning they were first published) in the post-World War II era and that deal with individual traumatic experiences of war and its aftermath. The examples selected can all be easily identified as adaptations based on established source texts and references made in films to these sources. When discussing these films, the plurality of these sources and influences must be considered. Although these film examples might "faithfully" follow their (auto)biographical source texts, they clearly demonstrate that which applies to all film adaptations (and generally speaking, to all historical-biographical films) – that in addition to a clearly identifiable source, there are other elements that influence the final "product", from parallel stories circulating in the public sphere to alternative or even contesting interpretations. The process of adaptation automatically involves consideration of known interpretations, and in the case of historical-biographical films, that of historical-biographical facts.

In public discussions, as mirrored in published reviews, these films are almost always placed in the context of their (auto)biographical source materials. Autobiographies and memoirs render a subjective experience of an autobiographical "I". Therefore, I found it interesting and necessary to discuss the specific features of (auto)biographical narratives adopted in film adaptations; with the particular focus on how, in the process of adaptation, the first-person narration of an autobiographical "I" is rendered or modified in film texts. My reasons to explore the narrator's perspective were to investigate the additional autobiographical layers added to biographical films (for example, through the use of techniques such as voice-over and POV shots). And in particular, how the adoption of these techniques that provide insight into the thought processes of the character as a means to engage the viewer, introduce a hypothetical or imaginary dimension to the historically "true" narrative. Furthermore, it should be noted that any "translation" or "transformation" of first-person subjectivity from an autobiographical text to film is challenging for filmmakers. However, as mentioned in chapter 2.2, *any* film adaptation faces this challenge, including the adaptations of fictional first-person narratives.

I found that Roman Polanski's film adaptation of W. Szpilman's memoir accentuates the use of the POV shot in an interesting manner, by ascribing it almost exclusively to the main character. The story's protagonist is present in most of the scenes in film, and the film adaptation closely follows Szpilman's own narrative. However, the use of the POV shot in *The Pianist* does more than merely present a "personal perspective". Here the subjective camera, although it accurately follows the point of view of the character, also incorporates the external perspective – thus stressing the role of the protagonist as a *witness,* which for the viewer creates an emotional distance between the protagonist and

the events on screen and serves to emphasize the unrelatable nature of the Holocaust. *The Pianist* is an example of a film that R. Burgoyne has described as "[i]lluminating the trauma of the historical past by focusing on an individual life", a "reenactment" of the past that conjures the illusion of "witnessing again"[86] the events of the past. However, the film does not invest in the "[p]ersonality and point of view" in order to become "the conduit of history",[87] as what is distinctly missing in *The Pianist* is a "heroic individual" as the main character.

Max Fäberböck's adaptation of the anonymous diary relies heavily on voice-over narration, thus creating a direct (if not a very "filmic") link to the source text. Anonyma's published diary functions as a witness statement. We follow the story of the fall of Berlin and the degradation of its citizens through the eyes of the diarist. Yet, the film can be interpreted as an attempt to construct an anonymous character, a "woman in Berlin", that encompasses the interpretations of the main character herself and the situation, "simultaneously preserving and evaluating" (Nussbaum 2007, 10) the events. The voice-over narrator in *A Woman in Berlin* is interestingly both intradiegetic and extradiegetic – by frequent commentary on what is shown on screen, "her voice" sometimes contrasts with the actor's performance, as if rendering an inner perspective of the protagonist. Equally often, the story shown on screen does not correlate with the voice-over narration, adding contrasting layers onto the film narrative.

Furthermore, the combination of biographical realism and subjectivity in this film enables us to identify the actor as an actual historical person. Through the "face and voice" of the biographical person portrayed on screen we can access the story told in a historical-biographical film as *his* or *her* story. However, the film adaptation can also influence – or even overlay – the image of the real biographical individual in public memory. The actor's performance and appearance not only impact on what is known about that person, but each portrayal adds to the overall perception and future interpretations of both historical and biographical knowledge. Here, famous historical individuals like Knut Hamsun require a careful portrayal by the filmmakers in order to create a "believable" character on screen. Yet equally important is that portraying an anonymous character in *A Woman in Berlin* also raises ethical issues related to the adaptation process and considerations of the historical-biographical film as adaptation: the less known an individual is to the viewer, the more "freedom" the filmmaker has in creating that portrayal. By giving "face and voice" to the character, his or her story is individualized, and when the source is anonymous, the question arises whether the film can be considered truly historical-biographical? I find that it can, when the adaptation is set in the context of the source material and considers the debates and issues around its reception.

We have seen that the films discussed here differ by content, style of narration and genre. It can be said that since these films are all based on autobiographical books, they are inherently biographical. Biography in general, including the

[86] Burgoyne (2008, 7), as discussed in this thesis in sub-chapter 1.1.
[87] Vidal (2014, 3), as discussed in this thesis in sub-chapter 1.2.

biographical film, is expected to offer a broad picture of a person's life and to follow historical and biographical facts. Still, without using autobiographical materials as sources, the writer of a biography can in no way render the thoughts and feelings of his main character without them becoming, at least partially, fictional. At the same time, these three films depict events limited to a specific period in the protagonist's life and offer little information beyond that. Moreover, the films discussed here center on well-known historical events and/or issues which to a considerable effect superimpose themselves on the biographical narrative.

The historical-biographical film can be approached by filmmakers and viewers in two ways, at the very least. Firstly, as a biography – by employing documentary material but by presenting a subjective interpretation of the storyline, and thus referring to other textual and non-textual sources. Or secondly, they could be viewed as adaptations of specific source text(s), as interpretations and transformations of particular stories, for example told by the biographer in their own (auto)biographical writing. The (auto)biographical writings themselves *could* be considered "transformations", as adaptations of life stories, memories and biographical sources in book form. Moreover, a historical-biographical film can be considered part of mainstream history, as it is represented in contemporary culture; partially as education and knowledge about the past, but partially as entertainment, a phenomenon of mass culture. As is, it most definitely shapes our understanding of what history *is* and *how it is narrated*; where "what happened" is as equally important as the understanding of "how it happened"; and here personal stories play a crucial role. This "subjectification", "fictionalization" or even "distortion" of history does not only emanate from the subjective and fictionalizing film medium, but also stems from the necessity of rendering a personal story. The historical-biographical film shapes our understanding of how history can be and is perceived from a multitude of different perspectives.

In previous chapters, based on three examples, I have discussed what features of the autobiographical narrative have reached the text of their film adaptations. I also asked whether analyzing the three historical-biographical films that I explored in my case studies *as adaptations* changes or adds anything to their interpretation? I found that it does: without the recognizable and traceable presence of "autobiographical voice", the film adaptation does not truly emerge as an adaptation, but a historical-biographical film (with its own analytical and aesthetical value, of course).

The authenticity of experience that is expected from and perceived in the autobiographical narrative, changes these works as source materials for the adapters as well, and as such (in ways that can be difficult to identify) these texts function differently from fiction. Namely, the freedom of interpretation and error margins that allow for a "faithful" representation of the story are significantly more important for filmmakers. Therefore, historical-biographical film as an adaptation of a personal story does function differently as compared to a "based on a true story" film. Based on this understanding, I explored how in

the process of adaptation of autobiographical stories filmmakers face both technical and ethical challenges, particularly in terms of retaining a subjective perspective of their source materials. In addition, adaptations of memoirs and biographies include input from either an autobiographer's personal account of events or the biographer's own version of the story, which are further altered by the choices and interpretation of filmmakers. This contributes to a wider scheme of concerns relevant to the process of adaptation as well as to the reception of films in specific cultural contexts. My suggestion is that considering these films not as historical-biographical dramas but rather as adaptations of non-fiction autobiographical writing, does influence *both* the film and the source texts. This is illustrated by how these films are perceived by the public and by critics, and how the reception of the source material is thus re-shaped through the context of cultural discourse surrounding these works.

Kamilla Elliot views adaptation as "a composite of textual and filmic signs merging in audience consciousness together with other cultural narratives and often leads to confusion as to which is the novel and which is film" (Elliott 2003, 157). Although the films discussed here are adaptations with clearly identifiable "precursor texts", the overall cultural circulation of themes, subject and genre matters, previous interpretations and so on constitute as "precursor texts" as well. Here, there is little difference whether the adapted literary text happens to be an (auto)biographical or fictional work – the historical context, especially in the case of sensitive and/or controversial subject matter, often superimposes itself on the film adaptation.

What unites the source texts discussed here is personal trauma, related to the cataclysmic historical events of the Second World War. In the case of *The Pianist* and *A Woman in Berlin*, these experiences, as they are portrayed in film adaptations, can be related to the autobiographical source texts. That the source material that film claims to be an adaptation of, has equal or even more importance for the reviewer than the film text itself, is demonstrated by the reception of Fäberböck's *A Woman in Berlin*. The story of publishing, the initial public outrage, the later reveal of the identity of the anonymous author form an important part of the context for both book and film. This influences how the film is evaluated – not solely based on its artistic merit, but as an adaptation, wherein it owes much to its precursor text. Through the historical film, an anonymous author, who could be *any* woman in Eastern Berlin in 1945, receives a screen identity, and thusly, the diary and its film adaptation emerge together in the later discourse.

The case of *The Pianist* shows that in addition to the source material, the overall attitude and understanding of how the Holocaust is to be represented in film (and how it *can* be represented), influences the reception of the film. For example, Roman Polanski was applauded for avoiding the "usual sentimentality" of "a Holocaust film". In addition, he was an authority regarding the events of the Holocaust because of his own personal experiences. This fact added certain "authenticity" to his interpretation of Władysław Szpilman's

story, but also encouraged many to consider the possible autobiographical influences Polanski as a director included in his film adaptation.

In the case of *Hamsun*, one can, as I have argued, trace the sources through the biographical-documentary novel to several (auto)biographical sources. Jan Troell's *Hamsun* is based on Thorkild Hansen's documentary novel. In his overall interpretation and approach to Knut Hamsun's character, Thorkild Hansen has relied heavily on the writings of Knut Hamsun, including the book *On Overgrown Paths*. This makes any conclusions on the source-adaptation track very difficult. In autobiography, the textual representation of the world is constructed through memory. In the case of *Hamsun*, the film is based on the biographical documentary novel that to a great deal uses autobiographical writing as input material, adding to this the subjective perspective of Thorkild Hansen. Some interesting questions regarding the intertextual nature of using multiple sources of an adaptation arise when we consider that the "voice" of Knut Hamsun from *On Overgrown Paths* has influenced the film adaptation through Thorkild Hansen's documentary-biographical narrative, and that both screenwriter P. O. Enquist and director Jan Troell added their interpretations, as did Max von Sydow through his acting performance. The impact of Knut Hamsun's own perspective on events has also impacted on how the biographical film presents these to wider audiences.

In chapter 2.1, I pointed out the ways in which historical and biographical films can be viewed as adaptations. Are they then discussed as adaptations of "reality" or as adaptations of identifiable source materials? Whether the question "is the movie telling a true story?" or "is it faithful to the facts?", is a value assessment that a historical-biographical film cannot escape. The "fidelity debate", I find, gains much importance when discussing films that are based on non-fictional source materials. Therefore, in the case of (auto)biographies, one cannot forget that the adapted source material is a nonfictional text and, underlying it all, is the life story of a biographical person. Thus, the fact of regarding these films as adaptations does not exclude the opportunity to concurrently view them through the lens of historical-biographical films or as "based on a true story". The term "original", in this case, is debatable: is it the life story as gleaned by the filmmakers from all available biographical materials, including autobiographical texts, but not limited to a single "true source"? Or is some concentrated effort made to portray the events and the biographical individual in the movie as close to that presented in the autobiographical work? As the examples above demonstrate, it can be both.

For this dual reason, film adaptations of life narratives are intriguing, they refer both to their source texts and to the extratextual world to which those source texts *also* refer. Further, film adaptations should be viewed in connection to the spectator's here-and-now with the spectator watching the adaptation and trying to come to terms with it from his or her perspective in a given cultural context. Finally, they should also be viewed through their connections to previous films. (And we can widen this circle further and further). Therefore, a film adaptation of any (auto)biographical work is a "double adaptation" in

itself. *Should* then there be more consideration given to the fidelity discourse when an adaptation originates not in a fictional text, but in an autobiographical one?

As previously discussed, historical-biographical films tend to contend with a "real history" and present viewers with their interpretation of historical events. In this way, historical films "make history" by creating stories that "become history" in the viewers' understanding. And, using film medium, they seem to mirror the actual reality more accurately than the written texts can. In this sense, their "reality effect" is beyond doubt. This thesis has shown that questions of historical accuracy and/or revisionism have played a crucial role in how the three films were received by critics. I find that the historical-biographical films sometimes need to be viewed in the light of their connection to previous films that use similar subject matter.

It would be difficult to view *The Pianist* outside of its connection to the "genre" of the Holocaust films. Without this context and subsequent genre expectations, the film would not have been able to appeal to the audience in the same manner (to the same degree). By utilization of a retrospective perspective on unfathomable events, the link between the main character as an onlooker/ witness, and the film viewer as a spectator is established. Even without reading the book that the film is based on, the film expands our understanding of the Holocaust as an historical event. The biographical life events adopt a secondary role as character Władysław Szpilman in the film adaptation stands first and foremost as a witness to historical events.

Nevertheless, as the example of the film adaptation of *A Woman in Berlin* demonstrates, even when the filmmakers include direct verbal quotations from the source material to emphasize the authenticity of the character they portray on screen, the story itself functions mainly through the context that the viewer gains from prior historical and cultural knowledge. Without the controversial public reception of this anonymous diary, the film adaptation of *A Woman in Berlin* would remain a "reenactment" of the past, possibly viewed as a melo-dramatic love story against the backdrop of the war. It was the particular subject matter and the issues that the diary raised – specifically, the negative public reception of the original publication, the outing of the anonymous author, the ethical implications of portraying a real-life character wishing to remain anonymous, and so on – that added a layer of interpretational possibilities that without the context of the source text would not have emerged.

Controversial subject matters and personas tend to invite interest – and sell movies. Jan Troell's *Hamsun* is a great example of a motion picture that managed to gain international attention even though the subject was first and foremost of national importance. By introducing "Knut Hamsun as a Nazi symphatizer", by opening the international debate on possible and probable "hows" and "whys" to this, the film invites to consider other such examples wherein the image (and cultural myth) of a great artist stands against pre-dominant political and ethical views of the society. Wherein the true interest in studying this film adaptation lies in Knut Hamsun's own perspective on events,

his worldview has transferred into the film narrative through a "stopgap" of previous biographical work(s). Whereas we cannot by no means say that *Hamsun* is an adaptation of *On Overgrown Paths*, Thorkild Hansen's biographical novel organizes paths for Hamsun's own perspective to be represented in the film. What, in this case, is the film then adapting? This, in turn, invites us to consider the limitations of what can be considered an adaption, and specifically, what can be considered an adaption in the case of non-fictional (yet inherently subjective) materials.

When historical or biographical films include the problematic reference to the "true story", this is evidenced to influence the viewers' understanding and interpretation of these films. The historical films have the capability to make the past matter – make it a *personal experience* – and concurrently to emphasize the distance that separates us from historical events. Biographical film has the ability to interpret "what it felt like to be this particular person" (Eakin, 1992, 54). Here, by connecting the present place and time with the past, historical film as a product of mass culture makes it possible through a "personal cultural experience access the collective memory" (Landsberg 2004, 143). When discussing films that are separated from their source texts by a long period of time, the comparisons of the context of the adaptation to the situation wherein the source text first emerged, mirror changes in ideological tendencies, values and beliefs of the society. But one must pay attention not only to the current reception of the adaptation, but – through adaptation – also to the possible ways the source text is re-evaluated and re-interpreted.

The end of the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall and emerging narratives from the former Soviet republics changed the perception of the Second World War by bringing new perspectives into view. By the turn of this century, increased interest in how the events of the WWII affected people on *all* sides of the conflict, has led to multiple interpretations of events that would previously have been considered controversial or provocative. This change in both social norms and the political climate have also been mirrored in the production and reception of these film adaptations.

The films I have explored do not claim to be objective, factual representations of history and/or biography. They are historical-biographical drama films and not documentaries. Yet, I have shown that the complex issues of representation and authenticity arise in their reception. Firstly, the issue of historical and biographical factuality is relevant. Of equal importance is the representation of source materials, especially the autobiographical "I". As my discussion has demonstrated, the "truth" of a personal story may differ from the perceived historical "truth", either as accepted by society or by the individual reading the book or watching the film. Films discussed are adaptations of personal stories that emerged in response to traumatic events of great historical importance. Therefor it is crucial to consider the personal, subjective "truth" of the (auto)biographical narrator from the original text in wider context. Any historical-biographical film that is either "based on a true story" or an adaptation of recognizable source material, functions as a transformative, inter-

pretative act. The perception of the "truth" by adapters/filmmakers too influences the end result as they add their own subjective and personal perspectives to the film. This "personal perspective" can provoke tension and posit ethical dilemmas, both for the filmmakers and viewers. Personal narratives and screen adaptations of these stories challenge us as readers and viewers, as these may contrast with our perception of the "true story". Here it is important to remember that, although historical-biographical films are expected to be "based on a true story" and remain faithful to facts, the viewers are aware that both the source text and its adaptation are personal stories – these can be accepted or disputed, as they are recognized as interpretations of historical and biographical facts. Still, these stories do not just happen to gain cultural presence, but there is always a reason – be it historical, political, societal – why a story about the past has found its place in the collective cultural memory.

Consequently, as the films discussed here demonstrate, it is difficult to separate the historical-biographical film from its source materials. Similarly, while I cannot find a way to separate the historical-biographical film from debates of reality and history, neither do I view them as adaptations of a "real-life story" on screen. The historical-biographical film is indeed a type of a historical narrative with distinct features. It features elemental shifts between facts, history and life as these are remembered or presented in various texts. It presents us with the imaginary, fictional textual world of the film narrative, where an actor becomes both a character and a re-imagination of a real-life person amidst turbulent history.

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SUMMARY

Cataclysmic events like the Second World War have been told of in literally thousands of films, in different genres, from different perspectives that each influence our collective memory. Historical films offer a momentary illusion of experiencing past through a story. At the same time historical film emphasizes the distance that separates us from depicted events – the history, as we see it in film, is both fact and fiction. Cinematic illusion leads to natural assumption that the past is *truly* depicted on screen, however impossible we know this to be. (Auto)biographies, while taking part of the overall history-making themselves, offer an enticing opportunity for filmmakers to include a "true personal story", thereby adding an aura of "authenticity" to the film. Such personal stories, retold and re-interpreted through historical-biographical films, can become important frames of cultural reference. They can also challenge, contest or modify previously accepted versions of history.

In past decades, life narratives, in various forms, have received much attention. Film studies also offer closer examination of historical and biographical films, that for a long time were disregarded amongst scholars (being perceived as part of mass entertainment that fictionalizes history and offers no significant artistic merit in order to deserve closer examination). And even though adaptation studies have in the past decade significantly broadened their scope of interest, reaching much further than the literature-to-film axis, still very few studies concerning historical-biographical film *as adaptation,* specifically as adaptation of autobiographical narrative, are found.

Therefore, the main focus of this dissertation, titled *Poetics of adaptation and point of view: literary and documentary sources of the historical-biographical film* is the process of adaptation of autobiographical stories and the ethical choices the filmmakers face in their attempt to preserve the subjective perspective, at the same time facing the challenge to present an historically "accurate" story. As any adaptation includes a process of interpretation and selection, filmmakers face difficult ethical choices due to the transformative aspects of film medium, temporal and cultural distance, changes in public taste and cultural conventions. This dissertation therefore explores and discusses whether and how the first-person perspective is rendered in film narration and how filmmakers' choices bear on the poetics of adaptation.

The first chapter of this thesis includes an overall introduction, wherein problem statement and questions are outlined. In following two subchapters (1.1 and 1.2) both historical and biographical films as cultural phenomena are discussed, also considering general genre considerations. The second chapter gives an overview of the theoretical background and conceptual framework for approaching adaptations (2.1), what exactly is considered being adapted onto screen when talking about adapting (auto)biographies (2.2). The three case studies follow this theoretical setup. In case studies, the focus lies on questions of what features of the autobiographical narrative have reached the film

adaptation and does considering these films *as adaptations* change or add something to their perception and interpretation. The main points and critical insights of these case studies are then summarized in the final conclusion (3.4).

Three case studies focus on three personal stories told in film adaptations, based on (auto)biographical narratives. All three stories are related to Second World War and the traumatic, bewildering effect of the war and its aftermath on an individual life:

Directed by Roman Polanski, *The Pianist* is a 2002 film adaptation of the memoirs of the celebrated Jewish musician Władysław Szpilman. The book, after its publication in Poland after the war, fell into obscurity and was re-discovered in the 1980, when the "memory boom", especially regarding the Second World War events, meant rising interest towards personal narratives of the Holocaust. Himself a Polish Jew and a Holocaust survivor, Roman Polanski was praised for his adaptation of Szpilman's story, for both avoiding the "usual sentimentality" of the the drama films that handle the sensitive subject matter of the Holocaust and at for managing to create an "authentic feel" in fiction film. In chapter 3.1, both the transposition of the point of view and perspective of the main character – W. Szpilman as portrayed in film, and the genre expectations that influence the so-called "Holocaust films" and how the adaptation of a personal life narrative fits into this, are discussed.

Directed by Max Fäberböck, *Anonyma – Eine Frau in Berlin* (2008) is and adaptation of an anonymous diary titled *A Woman in Berlin. Diary 20 April 1945 to 22 June 1945*, that tells of the last days of war in Berlin in 1945. Being one the best known personal narratives of the violence that Red Army troops committed against German civilians, this book disputed the attitude of "moving on" from the issues that the aftermath of the war meant for German nation. Due to political climate and also the controversial subject of the diary – rape as a war crime – this anonymous story remained out of public discussion. The re-publication of the diary in 2003 created great furor, not only due to reminding the public how this story was first received, but also the question of bringing the identity of an anonymous author into the light. The film adaptation found recognition in the general socio-cultural debate that followed mostly in connection to the source text – these issues are examined in chapter 3.2.

Swedish director Jan Troell's historical-biographical drama *Hamsun* (1996) is an adaptation of the Danish author Thorkild Hansen's documentary novel *Processen mod Hamsun* (1978). Focusing on the "case" of Hamsun, namely the accusations the admired Norwegian novelist Knut Hamsun faced after the war, due to the support he had shown towards Nazi occupants in Norway, the film both concentrates on the trial and the events that lead to that. Mostly, set on the background of the occupation of Norway, it is a portrayal of Hamsun himself and the drama of his family life. However, there are recognizable echoes of Knut Hamsun's own voice, from his last novel, the autobiographical *On Overgrown Paths* (1949) in both Hansen's book and in its film adaptation. The intertextual connections between the three texts are discussed in chapter 3.3.

Adaptation of life narratives, especially autobiographical narratives, poses certain obvious challenges: first and foremost, of how to transfer the subjective point-of-view of the autobiographical "I" into the film narrative. However, here one can claim that issues of cinematic adaptation of a first-person narrative are *always* present, regardless if the "original" is fiction or non-fiction. This thesis suggests that considering these films not simply as historical-biographical dramas, but as adaptations of non-fictional, autobiographical writings, does influence *both* the film and the source texts.

Almost half a century separates the original autobiographical narratives from these personal stories told in film. How these (auto)biographical narratives resonate today, in contemporary culture, differs significantly from their initial reception: this thesis therefore examines the source texts and their film adaptations both as texts and texts in context. Often involving exploration of ethically sensitive, controversial facts and events of the past, presentation of subjective versions of those events, and consideration of difficult issues of personal involvement or complicity, adaptation of a personal story therefore posits particularly difficult ethical dilemmas.

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Doktoritöö "Adaptatsiooni ja vaatepunkti poeetika: ajaloolis-biograafilise filmiteose kirjanduslikud ja dokumentaalsed allikad" uurimisobjektiks on (auto)biograafilistel teostel põhinevad ajaloolis-biograafilised filmid. Töö võrdleb filmimugandusi nende allikatega, arvesse võttes mõisteid nagu "kirjanduslikkus", "fiktsionaalsus", "ustavus alustekstile", "hübriidsus" ja "intertekstuaalsus". Valitud tekstide võrdleval analüüsil on peatähelepanu sellel, kuidas ajaloolis-biograafilises filmilavastuses kajastub mugandatud allikteksti (mina)jutustaja subjektiivne vaatepunkt ning kuidas see adaptsiooniprotsessi käigus teiseneb ja muutub. Biograafline film, mille peamiseks allikaks on autobiograafiline kirjutis (päevik, memuaar, kirjanduslik autobiograafia jms) võib enda eesmärgiks seada portreteeritava isiku kujutamise alusteksti minajutustusele võimalikult lähedaselt (n.ö teadlikult püüdes seda subjektiivsust säilitada). Kuid mitmetel põhjustel, näiteks ajaloolise filmi žanrikonventsioonide ja -ootuste tõttu, või teiste materjalide, nii dokumentaalsete kui kirjanduslike kaasamisel, võib filmilavastus ka porterteeritava peategelase subjektiivsusest kaugeneda. Tänapäeval moodustavad nii eluloofilmid kui ajaloolised filmid märkimisväärse osa sellest pagasist, mis mõjutab publiku arusaamist, kuidas ajaloolised sündmused aset leidsid. Autobiograafilisi tekste on läbi ajaloo käsitletud kui osa ajalookirjutistest – need on subjektiivsed, isiklikud tekstid, personaalsete kogemuste kajastused, millest ometi eeldatakse teatavat tõepära ja autentsust. Biograafia pakub samuti isiklikku, subjektiivset vaadet isiku eluloole ja -kogemustele. Seega ajaloolise filmi tegijatele pakuvad (auto)biograafilised narratiivid võimalust sellist isiklikku kogemust rõhutada, tuues läbi peategelase isiku sündmused vaatajale lähemale. Eluloofilm kui ajaloolise sündmuse tõlgendus läbi subjektiivse, individuaalse loo prisma, võib niihästi kinnitada kui ka muuta ja vastanduda üldiselt aktsepteeritud "ajaloole", tekitades ühiskonnas laiema diskussiooni.

Ometi ei ole ajaloolis-biograafilise filmi *kui adaptsiooni* olemusele ja toimemehhanismidele seni palju tähelepanu pööratud. Põhjuseks võib tuua mitmeid asjaolusid. Esiteks on ajaloolis-biograafilisi filme keeruline ühise katusmõiste alla liita, kuna žanriliselt võib siit leida väga palju erinevaid filmi-ilminguid: draamadest põnevike, spordifilmidest muusikalideni jne. Elulood filmilinal on samuti pikka aega jäänud filmiuurijate jaoks tahaplaanile kui massikultuuri nähtus, alles viimastel kümnenditel on eluloofilmi žanriuuringutes väärtustama hakatud. Nii on ka filmimugandusi pikalt vaadeldud eelkõige (kirjanduskaanonisse kuuluva) ilukirjanduse rändamisega filmilinale, seades seejuures esiplaanile "originaali" ehk kirjanduslikku teksti. Kuid viimase paarikümne aasta jooksul on adaptsiooniteooria märgatavalt oma haaret laiendanud: teoreetikud nagu Robert Stam, Thomas Leitch ja Linda Hutcheon on esitanud üleskutse näha adaptsiooniuuringutes enamat kui kirjanduse ja filmi suhet ja pöörama tähelepanu mitte niivõrd "originaali" ja "adaptsiooni" omavahelisele suhestusele, kuivõrd intertekstuaalsetele seostele nende ja paljude teiste

kultuuris ringlevate tekstide vahel. Niisamuti on adaptsiooniteooria tänapäeval küsimas, mida üldse võiks adaptsiooniks lugeda: täna vaadeldakse adaptsiooni vaatenurgast nii filme ja telelavastusi, näidendeid ja esitluskunsti kui ka näiteks arvutimänge ning lõbustusparkide atraktsioone (vt nt Hutcheon ((2006) 2012).

Käesoleva doktoritöö peamine fookus on (auto)biograafiliste lugude mugandamise protsess ja valikud, millega filmitegijad püüavad säilitada allikteksti subjektiivset perspektiivi, seistes samal ajal silmitsi väljakutsega esitada ajalooliselt "tõene" lugu. Doktoritöös lähemaks analüüsiks valitud filmid tuginevad kõik suurel määral portreteeritud isikute autobiograafilistele kirjutistele, keskendudes kindlale, ajaliselt piiratud perioodile, olles olulised niihästi lokaalses kui laiemalt rahvusvahelises tähenduses. Jutustatud "lood" tõusevad esile teatud konkreetses ajaloolis-poliitilises kontekstis: doktoritöö uurib subjektiivset jutustust ja (auto)biograafia adaptsiooni kolme filmilavastuse näitel – kõik kolm filmi keskenduvad kolmele isiklikule traumaatilisele kogemusele ja läbielamistele, mis on seotud Teise maailmasõja sündmustega.

Väitekirja *esimene peatükk* pakub tööle üldise tausta ning raamistiku: probleemipüstitus tugineb ajaloolisuse, "tõe" ja fiktsiooni küsimustele ajaloolis-biograafilises filmis. Järgmises kahes alapeatükis (1.1 ja 1.2) käsitletakse nii ajaloolisi kui ka biograafilisi filme (massi)kultuurifenomenina, võttes arvesse üldisi žanrikaalutlusi. Ajalugu, nagu seda kinolinal näeme, on kahtlemata seotud reaalsusega, tuginedes "tõestisündinud lugudele". Filmimeediumi spetsiifikast lähtuvalt on ajalooline film ühtaegu ka fiktsioon. Filmivaataja kogeb minevikku oleviku ajahetkes: see rõhutab distantsi, mis lahutab kujutatud sündmuste tegelikku aega nende loo kinolinal vaatamise ajast. Kuid samas ajalooline film loob sideme vaataja ja mineviku vahel: asetades tegelased ajaloosündmuste keskele, ei ole ajalugu filmilinal mitte faktide ja sündmuste kogum, vaid isikustatud lugu. Ajalooline film kutsub samuti mõtisklema, millistele allikatele on filmitegijad selle loo jutustamisel tuginenud: on see üldteada, ajalooraamatutest ja klassiruumist pärinev ajalooteadmine või on filmi eesmärk vastanduda, pakkuda teistsugust tõlgendust?

Doktoritöö *teine peatükk* annab lühikese ülevaate (filmi)adaptsiooni uurimise teoreetilistest pidepunktidest ja adaptsiooniteooria kontseptuaalsest raamistikust (2.1). Alapeatükk 2.2 tutvustab neid põhijooni ja -probleeme autobiograafilises jutustuses, mille filmikeelde tõlkimisega võiks eeldada tekkivat kõige enam probleeme. Kuidas ja milliste võtetega filmitegijad neid lahendada püüavad, on lühidalt kirjeldatud alapeatükis 2.2.2.

Elulood kinolinal on ülimalt populaarsed – piisab vaid heita pilk erinevate filmiauhindade nimistule. See, mis lugejat köidab (auto)biograafia puhul – see subjektiivne nägemus, mis Paul John Eakini sõnul "võimaldab rekonstrueerida" seda tunnet, mida võis kogeda portreteeritav inimene (1992, 54) – köidab meid ka biograafilises filmiteoses. Kuid autobiograafilise mina subjektiivsus on midagi, mida filmiadaptsiooni puhul näevad paljud olevat paratamatu kaotuse – filmijutustuses "minajutustaja" esiletoomine on keeruline. Loomaks kinolinal kaasahaaravat ja kergesti hoomatavat meelelahutust, kombineerivad filmitegijad subjektiivset kaamerat paljude teiste tehniliste lahendustega, mis kas otseselt

või kaudselt püüavad mugandatud algallika "subjektiivset minajutustajat" vaatajale edasi anda. Lisaks pöörduvad mitmed sellised adaptsioonid ka vägagi mitte-kinematograafilise lahenduse ehk kaadritaguse hääle kasutamise poole. Käesoleva doktoritöö analüütilised peatükid keskenduvad eelkõige küsimustele, millised autobiograafilise narratiivi omadused on jõudnud filmiadaptsiooni ja kas nende filmide käsitlemine adaptsioonina muudab või lisab midagi nende retseptsioonile. Lisaks filmi- ja kirjandustekstidele on kontekstilises arutelus kaasatud valitud filmiarvustused, niihästi tuntud filmikriitikute kui n.ö tava-publiku hinnanguna.

Doktoritöö *kolmas peatükk* keskendub seega filmiadaptsiooni ja selle alustekstide võrdlusele klassikalise *case study* võtmes:

Režissöör Roman Polanski "Pianist" (2002) on juudi rahvusest Poola muusiku Władysław Szpilmani memuaaride filmiadaptsioon. Pärast sõjajärgset avaldamist Poolas langes raamat kommunistliku režiimiga riigis ebasoosingusse ning alles möödunud sajandi viimasel kümnendil avaldati teos saksakeelses tõlkes uuesti, misjärel see kogus kiiresti tuntust ka ingliskeelses kultuuriruumis. Režissöör Roman Polanski, kes ka ise elas üle holokausti sündmused Poolas, on kriitikute sõnul suutnud ilma "ülearuse sentimentaalsuseta" autentselt, niihästi ajaloolistele faktidele kui ka allikteksti materjalile ülimalt truuks jäädes W. Szpilmani loo edasi anda. Kuidas (ning miks) on aga autobiograafilise minajutustaja vaatepunkti filmiadaptsioonis rõhutatud ja millisel moel on filmilavastust mõjutanud holokausti filmilinal käsitlemise eetilised ja esteetilised väljakutsed, on arutlusel käesoleva töö alapeatükis 3.1.

Režissöör Max Fäberböcki "Naine Berliinis" (2008) on anonüümse autori poolt 1954. aastal avaldatud samanimelise päevikuteksti ekraniseering. Päevik jutustab Teise maailmasõja viimastest päevadest Berliinis, 1945. aasta kevad-suvel. Autor, noor saksa naine, kirjeldab selles lühikeses tekstis sõja viimaste päevade õudusi, sealjuures ülima detailsusega ka seksuaalset vägivalda, mida Punaarmee sõdurid karistamatult toime panid. Päevik tekitas ilmumise järel vastakaid reaktsioone, niihästi poliitilistel põhjustel kui ka tulenevalt autori avameelsusest delikaatse teema käsitlemisel. Saksa keeles avaldati päevik kordustrükis pärast autori surma, 2003. aastal ning põhjustas ühiskonnas taas tulise debati, eelkõige tuues laiema avalikkuse ette nimetatud "unustatud" teemad kui ka eetilistel põhjustel: vastupidiselt autori soovidele avalikustati tema isik. Kuidas filmiadaptsioon asetub sellesse konteksti ja kuidas see suhestub allikmaterjaliga, on peamisteks küsimusteks alapeatükis 3.2.

Ka viimane käsitletav film, rootsi režissöör Jan Troelli ajaloolis-biograafiline draama "Hamsun" (1996), taaselustas pikalt tähelepanu alt kõrvale jäänud ühiskondliku debati. Film on taanlasest kirjaniku Thorkild Hanseni dokumentaal-romaani "Processen mod Hamsun" (1978) adaptsioon. Hanseni teos keskendub peamiselt "Hamsuni kohtuasjale" ehk süüdistustele, mis esitati Knut Hamsunile tulenevalt kirjaniku avalikust toetusest Hitlerile ja sõjaaegsele natside okupatsioonile Norras. Hansen toetus oma biograafilises romaanis Knut Hamsuni hingeelu kujutamisel väga paljus kirjaniku viimasele romaanile, autobiograafilisele "Rohtunud radadel" (1949). Filmimugandus järgib Thorkild

Hanseni nägemust "Hamsuni süüst", kuid samuti on selles äratuntav Knut Hamsuni enda vaatepunkt. Kolme teksti vahelisi intertekstuaalseid seoseid on käsitletud alapeatükis 3.3.

Analüüsi peamised punktid ja kriitilised järeldused on kokku võetud doktoritöö viimases peatükis (3.4). Mainitud kolme filmi lahutab ajaloolistest sündmustest, millest nad jutustavad, rohkem kui pool sajandit. (Auto)biograafilised tekstid, millele need filmiadaptsioonid tuginevad, on esmakordselt ilmunud samuti mitmete aastakümnete eest. See, millises kontekstis loeti nimetatud autobiograafilisi tekste, erineb märkimisväärselt filmiadaptsioonide vastuvõtust. Käesolev väitekiri leiab, et filmide käsitlemine mitte ainult ajaloolis-biograafiliste draamadena, vaid *mittefiktsionaalsete* autobiograafiliste kirjutiste *adaptsioonidena* mõjutab nii filmiteose tõlgendust kui kandub üle ka alusteksti retseptsiooni. Filmiadaptsioonid mitte ainult ei peegelda poliitilisi ja sotsiaalseid muutusi ühiskonnas, mis on selle aja jooksul aset leidnud, vaid asetavad ka alustekstid uude konteksti. Kuna igasugune (filmi)adaptsioon kujutab endast tõlgenduste ja valikute kogumit, saavad mittefiktsionaalsete tekstide muganduste juures oluliseks eetilised valikud: niihästi alusteksti jutustuse subjektiivsuse edasiandmisel kui ka ajaloolise "tõepärasuse" kujutamisel mõjutavad filmitegijate valikud adaptsiooni poeetikat, kujundades publiku ajalooteadmist.

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Completed projects:

PUT192 “Emergent Stories: Storytelling and Joint Sensemaking in Narrative Environments (1.01.2013−31.12.2016)”, Marina Grishakova, Institute of Culture Studies and Arts, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Tartu

ETF8874 “Narrative Forms and Functions in Contemporary Culture: Narrative as a Means of Cognition, Communication and Sense-Making (1.01.2011−31.12.2015)”, Marina Grishakova, Institute of Culture Studies and Arts, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Tartu

SF0180040s07 “World literature in Estonian culture. Estonian literature in world literature (a historical and modern paradigm) (1.01.2007−31.12.2012)”, Jüri Talvet, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Tartu

ETF7166 “The Semiotics of Narrative and Interdisciplinary Analysis of Culture (1.01.2007−31.12.2010)”, Marina Grishakova, Institute of Culture Studies and Arts, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Tartu

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Karjäär:

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Publikatsioonid:

Väitekirjaga seotud teaduspublikatsioonid:

Kangur, Katrin (2013). Knut Hamsun as a literary and film character. Interlitteraria, 18 (2), 382−396.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.12697/IL.2013.18.2.08

Teised publikatsioonid:

Nyström, Esbjörn; Stokstad, Ingunn; Kangur, Katrin (2011). *Litteratur och film. Samband och samspel ur skandinaviskt perspektiv.* Tartu: Tartu University Press.

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Käimasolevad projektid:

SHVHV16145T “Eesti-uuringute tippkeskus (TK145) (1.01.2016−1.03.2023)”, Liina Lukas, Tartu Ülikool, Humanitaarteaduste ja kunstide valdkond, kultuuriteaduste instituut.

PUT1481 “Imaginaarsete narratiivsete stsenaariumide roll kultuuridünaamikas (1.01.2017−31.12.2020)”, Marina Grišakova, Tartu Ülikool, Humanitaarteaduste ja kunstide valdkond, kultuuriteaduste instituut.

Lõppenud projektid:

PUT192 “Esilduvad lood: jutustamine ja ühine tähendusloome narratiivses keskkonnas (1.01.2013−31.12.2016)”, Marina Grišakova, Tartu Ülikool, Humanitaarteaduste ja kunstide valdkond, kultuuriteaduste instituut.

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SF0180040s07 “Maailmakirjandus eesti kultuuris. Eesti kirjandus maailmakirjanduses (ajalooline ja kaasaegne paradigma) (1.01.2007−31.12.2012)”, Jüri Talvet, Tartu Ülikool, Filosoofiateaduskond.

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